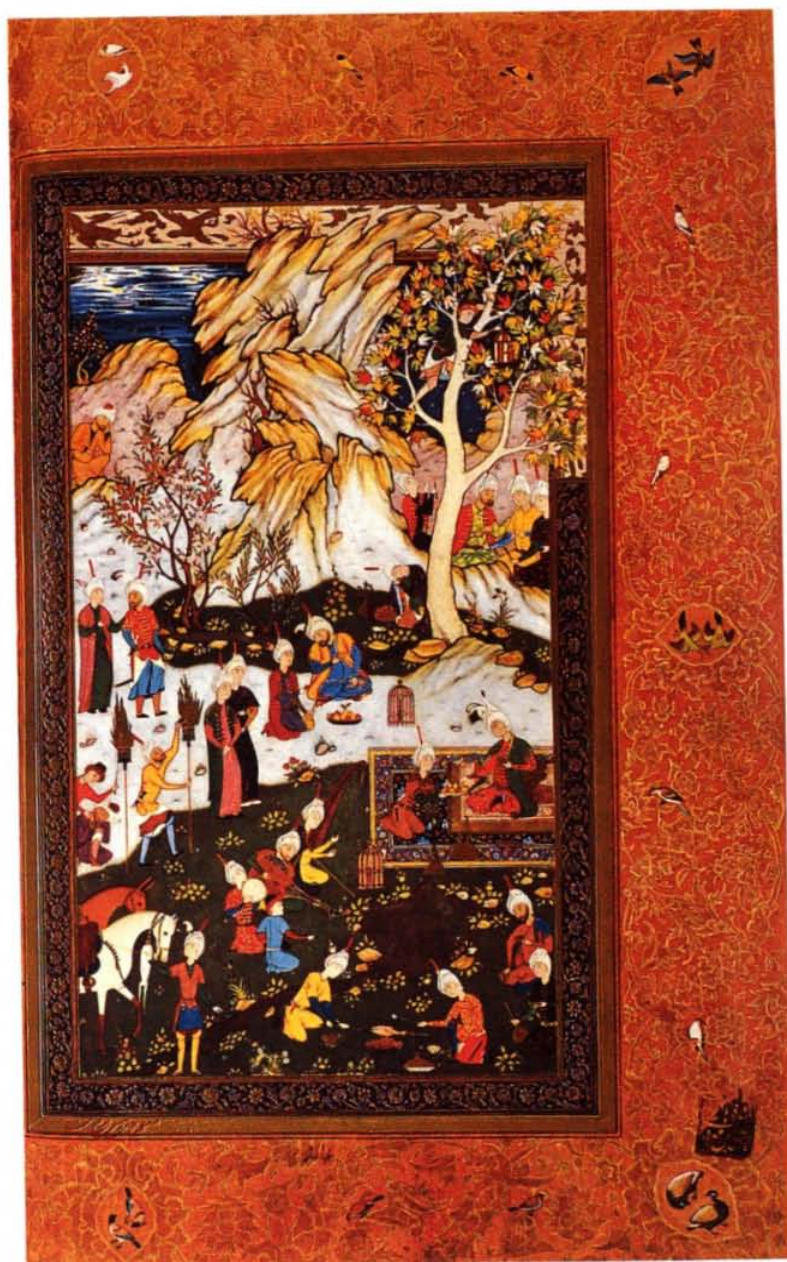


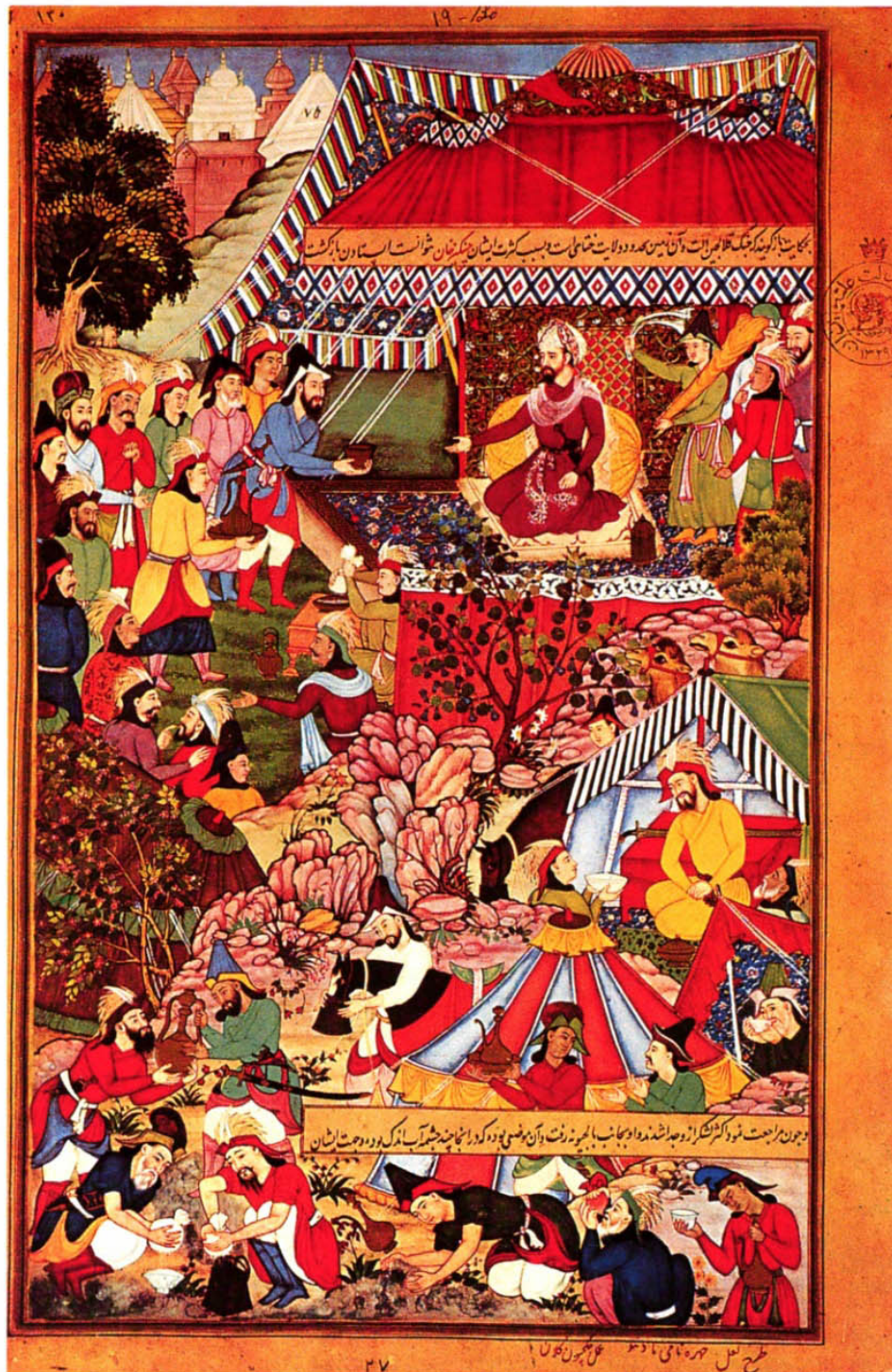


Mughal Masters

Further Studies

Marg Publications acknowledges the financial support
provided by UNESCO in the publication of this volume

Marg publications



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Vol. 49 No. 4, June 1998

Price: Rs 1850.00 / US\$ 59.00

ISBN: 81-85026-40-8

Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: 98-902736

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Published by J.J. Bhabha for Marg Publications on behalf of the National Centre for the Performing Arts at 24, Homi Mody Street, Mumbai 400 001.

Colour and black and white processing by Reproscan, Mumbai 400 093.

Printed by A.S. Vadiwala at Tata Donnelley Limited, Mumbai 400 025, India.



Page 1: "Picnic at night".
Attributed to Mir Sayyid 'Ali.
Circa 1540. From the
collection of Jahangir in the
Gulshan Muraqqa', Tehran.

Page 3: Folio from the
Jami' ut-Tawarikh, 1596. By
La'i and Jagjiwan, and portraits
by Madhav. Gulistan Palace
Library, Tehran.

Above: "Camp scene"
(detail). By Mir Sayyid 'Ali.
Circa 1540. Fogg Art Museum,
Cambridge, Mass.

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Editor's Note

The reader may come across differences in the spellings of certain words or the dating of some of the works discussed.

These variations represent the opinions of the different contributors.

Unless otherwise noted, the paintings are executed in opaque watercolour on paper.



Introduction

Asok Kumar Das

With the discovery of new material providing key information and new research on painters and their royal patrons, the study of Mughal painting has reached an interesting stage. The roles of individual masters in shaping the Mughal style and the manner in which the activities of the Mughal *taswirkhana* were conducted can now be more precisely delineated.

Marg partly covered the subject in 1991 by publishing the volume *Master Artists of the Imperial Mughal Court*, edited by Pratapaditya Pal. Though essays on individual painters — Mir Sayyid 'Ali, Khwaja 'Abd us-Samad, Daswant, Basawan, Kesavdas, Farrukh Beg, Miskin, Farrukh Chela, Mansur, Bishandas, and Abu'l Hasan — had been published by Ananda Coomaraswamy, Wilhelm Staude, Robert Skelton, Richard Ettinghausen, Stuart Cary Welch, Anand Krishna, Milo Beach, and the present writer, the Marg volume was the first concerted attempt to survey the works of some of the leading masters of the Mughal *taswirkhana*. The volume was very well received and was a sell-out, with requests pouring in for a reprint. Marg, however, decided to accord priority to a second volume with essays on those masters who could not be included in the first.

Though not explicitly stated, the selection of painters for the first volume was prompted by the desire to present the works of the leading members of the *taswirkhanas* of Akbar, Jahangir, and Shah Jahan, and to trace the gradual development of the Mughal style. To quote from the Preface:

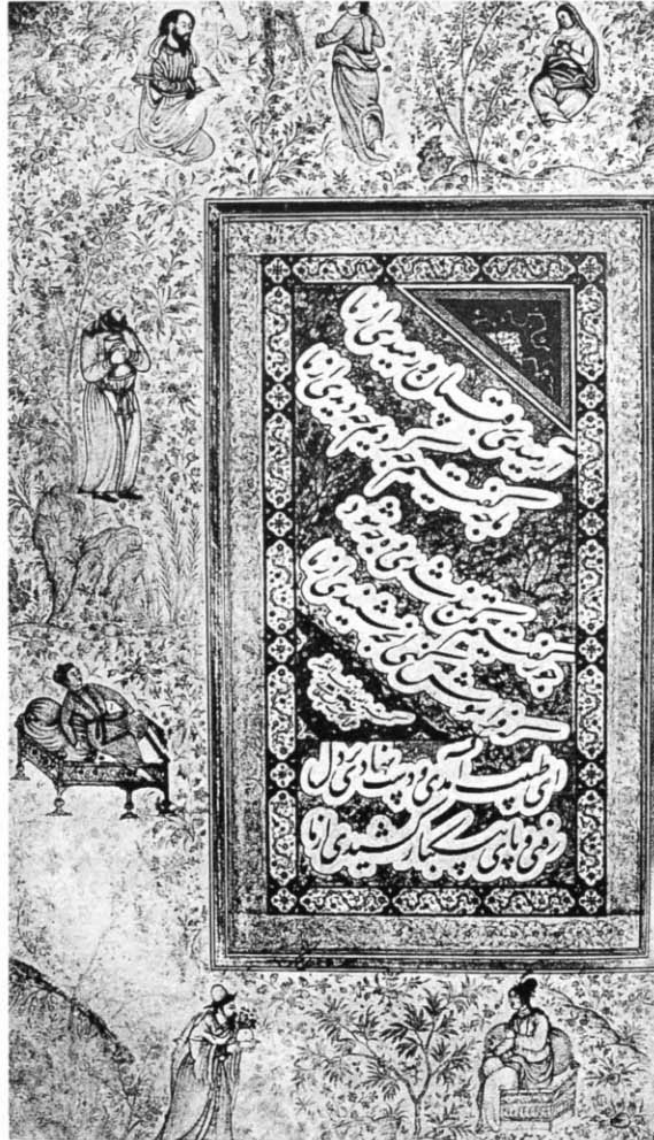
There are scores of Mughal Masters who deserve to be included in this volume but only nine have been selected. Some well-known names, such as Daswant and Govardhan, do not appear here because scholars invited to write about them did not in the end come through.

In the present volume we have included not only Daswant and Govardhan but also painters who contributed greatly in shaping the Mughal style, and others who established their reputation as artists of great merit in their lifetime. However, this editor too experienced the same difficulty as Dr Pal in getting the promised articles from invited contributors.

Mir Sayyid 'Ali and Khwaja 'Abd us-Samad have received ample scholarly attention in recent years. Stuart Cary Welch wrote on them, especially on Mir Sayyid 'Ali, in *A King's Book of Kings: The Shabnameh of Shah Tahmasp* (New York 1972), *Persian Painting: Five Royal Safavid Manuscripts of the Sixteenth Century* (New York 1976), *Wonders of the Age: Masterpieces of Early Safavid Painting 1501-1576* (Cambridge, Mass. 1979), and then extensively surveyed their careers and styles in the monumental work, *The Houghton Shabnameh* (Cambridge, Mass. 1981), written jointly with Martin Bernard Dickson. Anthony Welch's essay on Mir Sayyid 'Ali was published in the Marg volume, *Persian Masters: Five Centuries of Painting* (1990), edited by Sheila Canby, and Robert Skelton wrote on their contribution in his essay, "Iranian Artists in the Service of Humayun" in another Marg publication, *Humayun's Garden Party: Princes of the House of Timur and Early Mughal Painting* (1994), also edited by Sheila Canby. Nevertheless we still believe the two Persian artists are relevant to our study of Mughal masters, since the Mughal *taswirkhana* was founded by Humayun with them as key members, and the Mughal style had its origin in their joint enterprise.

Humayun's deep interest in painting prompted him to meet the leading painters of the Persian court in the course of his travels in Persia and to recruit the services of Mir Sayyid 'Ali, Khwaja 'Abd us-Samad, and a few others at a time when Shah Tahmasp, who was himself a great connoisseur and patron of painting, withdrew his patronage. These painters continued the great Safavid court tradition in Humayun's modest *taswirkhana* at Kabul, but the subjects of their work were prompted by Humayun's interest in images of people, contemporary events, and glimpses of nature. When Humayun was able to recover his lost

1. "Haftvad and the worm". Copy of an illustration to the *Shabnameh* of Shah Tahmasp by Dust Muhammad. Signed, "This picture was completed in the *kitabkhaneh* of Hazrat Zil-Ilahi Nur ud-Din Muhammad Jahangir Padshah Ghazi in the year 4" (1609-10). Jahangir Album. Staatsbibliothek Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Berlin. Folio 14a.



2. A folio of the *Gulshan Muraqqa'* with marginal drawings. Signed, "Aqa Riza; completed at Agra, in Ramazan 1008" (March-April 1600). Iran Bastan Museum, Tehran.

3. "Turkoman prisoner". Copy of an old Persian picture. Signed, "Murid ya Ikhlas Aqa Riza". Circa 1595-1600. Private collection, Jaipur.

throne in India in 1555 they followed him, and after his untimely death in a freak accident, continued to work for his son Akbar.

Akbar changed the scope and size of the *taswirkhana* in successive stages. When the monumental project of illustrating the stories of the *Dastan-i Amir Hamza* in fourteen super-large volumes, each of one hundred paper-lined cloth folios, was taken in hand, Mir Sayyid 'Ali was entrusted with the work. As he did not make much progress, after five years the job was given to Khwaja 'Abd us-Samad who completed it to the emperor's satisfaction by recruiting a large number of painters from different parts of the country. The completion of the *Hamza* volumes signalled the end of the regime of the Persian masters. By the time the



four-volume *Razmnama* manuscript was illustrated at Fatehpur Sikri in 1584-85, the *taswirkhana* had been transformed into a huge establishment employing over a hundred artists and artisans working under a dozen or more painters of proven merit. Though the precise part taken by these Persian masters in preparing the *Dastan-i Amir Hamza* cannot be determined from the small percentage of unsigned and unattributed paintings that have survived, it can be safely stated that such a gigantic and complex project could not have been undertaken and completed without the close association of these capable and experienced masters.

A.S. Melikian-Chirvani's essay on Mir Sayyid 'Ali sheds new light on many basic facts regarding his life and career, especially on his poetic acumen and on his keen powers of observation of men and nature. Sheila Canby also, without relating the well-known and oft-repeated facts of Khwaja 'Abd us-Samad's career and works, highlights a particular aspect of the Khwaja's work to provide an interesting sidelight on the style of this great painter.

There was further change in the *taswirkhana* when Akbar moved to Lahore in 1586 for a prolonged stay of more than twelve years. The number of manuscripts taken up for illustration there is stupendous. Their size varied from the tiny *Diwan-i Anuwari* of 1588 to the folio-size manuscripts of the *Tarikh-i 'Alfi*, *Tarikh-i Kbandan-i Timurryya*, and *Akbarnama*, and the number of illustrations ranged from six in the *Babaristan* to 191 in the *Baburnama*. Painters who dominated the scene during these years are Basawan, La'l, Kesavdas, Madhav, Mukund, Mahesh, Miskin, Farrukh Beg, Farrukh Chela, Sanwala, Nanha, Dharamdas, and Manohar, along with a number of skilful painters from Gujarat, Gwalior, Kashmir, and Lahore. We have surveyed the works of Daswant in the *Razmnama* before he committed suicide in 1584 when the manuscript was nearing completion, as these are the only surviving works of this great painter lauded by Abu'l Fazl as the greatest among the Indian painters at Akbar's court. Unfortunately, the manuscript is not available for study and only two of its 168 paintings have been photographed in colour. The present lot of colour

4. "Neptune riding on a water-horse". Coloured European print. Signed, "Work of Abu'l Hasan, son of Riza, Murud-i Padshah Salim in the year 1011" (1602-03). J.P. Goenka Collection.





5. "Young prince drinking". Signed, "Work of Ghulam". Inscribed above the prince's head, "Shah Salim". Circa 1600-05. Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Nasli and Alice Heeramaneck Collection, Museum Associates Purchase no. 81.8.12.

6. Copy of the engraving of St Anthony Abbot by Raphael Sadeler after Martin de Vos. Signed, "Work of Nadira Banu, daughter of Mir Taqi, pupil of Aqa Riza". Folio of the *Gulshan Muraqqa'*, Gulistan Palace Library, Tehran.



reproductions is from the hand-coloured photographic prints made under the supervision of Thomas Holbein Hendley more than a century ago.

La'l was the most prolific painter in Akbar's *taswirkhana* contributing more drawings and finished paintings than any other painter. In spite of his versatility in drawing pictures of court scenes, religious stories, or animal tales, he did not receive much scholarly attention. Som Prakash Verma's essay on this talented painter is the first major survey of his work spanning almost the entire period of Akbar's *taswirkhana* active in Agra, Fatehpur Sikri, and Lahore.

Kesavdas was also a prolific painter with a large number of exceptionally competent works to his credit. He not only copied or coloured European prints but also carefully studied their technical details and incorporated these in his own works to make them more meaningful and perfect. He is well known today for his copies and adaptations of European prints reproduced in publications by Ivan Stchoukine, Ernst Kuhnel and Hermann Goetz, T.W. Arnold and J.V.S. Wilkinson, Emmy Wellesz, and Milo Beach. A complete survey of this creative master cannot be undertaken without access to the *Ramayana* manuscript in Jaipur where he emerges as a major contributor with thirty-five full-page compositions of breathtaking splendour. Nevertheless, Amina Okada's essay in this volume focuses on the salient features of his style and his abiding interest in European art.

Robert Skelton's pioneering essay on Farrukh Beg published in 1957 dealt with the checkered career and works of this enigmatic master in extensive detail. New materials and new interpretations of familiar examples have since been published by Nazir Ahmad, Hana Knizkova, Mark Zebrowski, Karl Khandalavala, Stuart Cary Welch, John Seyller, and Robert Skelton himself, giving additional information, but Farrukh Beg continues to remain an enigma. The picture may clear once all the signed and attributed paintings of Farrukh

Husayn and Farrukh Beg in the *Gulshan Muraqqa'* are published and made available for study. We have tried to highlight two specific types of images which seem to have held particular fascination for Farrukh Beg. He was not alone in drawing pictures of young men, teachers and pupils, old devotees and saints, but his pictures on these subjects are more carefully painted and visually attractive than the rest.

Another Persian artist who had a hand in changing the course of Mughal painting, albeit in an indirect manner, is Aqa Riza al-Haravi. Arriving at the Mughal court in the footsteps of Farrukh Beg he found employment with Prince Salim who had just started his own *taswirkhana*. Salim's taste was different from his father's; his interest lay in collecting unusual and rare pictures and works of art. European prints of Christian subjects, Persian masterworks, and portraits were avidly sought by him. Aqa Riza was not a great painter himself, but he was an accomplished technician (figure 3) and a successful teacher. Most of his single-page pictures in the *Gulshan Muraqqa'* or "Berlin Album" and the signed or reliably attributed illustrations in the manuscripts prepared at Allahabad and Agra between 1600 and 1605-06 are based on well-known compositions of Persian masters — Mirza 'Ali, Shaykh Muhammad, Dust Muhammad (figure 1), and so on. His interest in European art is amply reflected in the marginal drawings of some of the folios of the *Gulshan Muraqqa'* (figure 2), and in the early works of his son Abu'l Hasan (figure 4), and his pupils Mirza Ghulam (figure 5) and Nadira Banu, daughter of Mir Taqi (figure 6), whose earliest signed works are copies of European prints. Aqa Riza was also interested in the art of marginal illustration as evident in the brilliant examples found in the great *muraqqa's* prepared for his patron to mount his collection of Persian masterworks, European prints, portraits and other images, and rare calligraphic passages of great Persian masters. Aqa Riza does not appear in this volume as the essay unfortunately did not come in time.

Jahangir was a discriminating connoisseur of painting and only those painters who came up to his set standard found his favour. In his Memoirs he only writes about three painters — Abu'l Hasan Nadir uz-Zaman, Mansur Nadir al-'Asr, and Bishandas, while two others, Farrukh Beg and Aqa Riza, are mentioned in *passim*. Three others — Manohar, Daulat, and Govardhan — though not mentioned in the Memoirs must have found his favour as Daulat was instructed to draw their portraits along with those of Abu'l Hasan and Bishandas on the margin of a folio of the *Gulshan Muraqqa'*. Manohar, Mansur, Abu'l Hasan, and Daulat were included in the earlier Marg volume, and now Govardhan and Bishandas have been accorded their rightful position.

Bishandas started to work in Akbar's *taswirkhana* during the last decade of the sixteenth century. The first work bearing his name is a double-page illustration of the *Baburnama* in which the important faces were retouched by his uncle Nanha. Thereafter he participated in all kinds of work — copying Persian miniatures, decorating the margins of *muraqqa's*, painting genre scenes — but his earlier works reveal his extraordinary skill in portraying individual ladies of the court when other painters showed them only as types. Jahangir selected him to go to Persia with the embassy of Khan 'Alam for his skill in drawing portraits. In our essay we have tried to assess his mastery in this genre by putting together all available materials which bear reliable attributions.

Govardhan was a major artist in Jahangir's *taswirkhana* contributing many portraits, court scenes, and pictures of holy men in an inimitable style. Milo Beach has closely followed the development of his style from the time he started to paint during the last few years of Akbar's reign, to the middle of Shah Jahan's reign. While the present essay throws ample light on this highly sensitive artist, Govardhan easily deserves a monograph.

Painters who could not be included here are Mukund, Madhav, Mahesh, and Sanwala, all mentioned by Abu'l Fazl in the list of masters of Akbar's *taswirkhana*, in the *A'in-i Akhari*, as well as Dharamdas and Farrukh Chela, familiar to students of Mughal painting for their striking creations. Perhaps they will one day form the subject matter of a third Marg volume on Mughal masters.



The Horses of 'Abd us-Samad

Sheila R. Canby

Recently much scholarly attention has focused on 'Abd us-Samad, one of the founders of the Mughal school of painting, with reference to textual accounts and the works signed by or attributed to him.¹ Additionally, the stylistic analyses of Stuart Cary Welch and Milo Cleveland Beach have set the parameters for accepting and rejecting attributed works.²

While these findings and conclusions will be reviewed here briefly, one might ask if anything about 'Abd us-Samad remains to be considered. Fortunately for the sake of this article, the iconography of 'Abd us-Samad's oeuvre remains relatively unstudied. The preponderance of single-page works made for inclusion in albums leads one to question their meaning and the role of the patron in the choice of subject. In addition to manuscript illustrations, the visual analogues of a written narrative, 'Abd us-Samad's single-page paintings and drawings in some instances relate to specific events and in others appear to contain more generalized symbolic information. In the latter category fall hunting scenes, visits to hermits in the countryside, and pictures of horses and grooms. Since this article will focus on 'Abd us-Samad's depiction of horses, several of his manuscript pages will be considered in addition to the album pages in which horses appear. The aim here is to identify the characteristics of 'Abd us-Samad's horses and to suggest how they figure in his work which spans the period from circa 1535 to circa 1600.

Khwajeh 'Abd us-Samad was born about 1515-20, the son of Khwajeh Nizam al-Mulk, a vizier of the governor of Shiraz. Although no text confirms it, he must have moved to Tabriz in late adolescence or early adulthood because in 1544 he met the Mughal emperor-in-exile, Humayun, then at the court of Shah Tahmasp. Although Humayun invited 'Abd us-Samad and Mir Sayyid 'Ali to join him, the artists did not accompany Humayun on his return to Kabul in 1545. Instead they left Tabriz in 1548, and after a delay in Qandahar they arrived at Humayun's court near Kabul in November 1549.³ With the exception of an absence from Humayun's camp of a few months in 1550-51, 'Abd us-Samad stayed with the emperor and was present during the invasion of India in 1555.

Although Humayun must have issued his invitation to 'Abd us-Samad on the basis of a body of work that he found pleasing, only four or five paintings have been attributed to this period of the artist's life. No Safavid sources mention 'Abd us-Samad, but S.C. Welch has attributed to the artist "The murder of Khusrau Parviz", an illustration to the *Shahnameh* of Shah Tahmasp, because of its stylistic connection with more firmly attributed works.⁴ The pivotal painting for the history of 'Abd us-Samad's Tabriz period is the "Dervish who cried out with nature in praise of God while his fellow travellers slept", a detached illustration to a *Gulistan* of Sa'di, in the Gulshan Album in Tehran (figure 2). In their poses and the shape of their heads, the figures of the travellers relate closely to those of the *Shahnameh* illustration. Yet, the dramatic rocky outcrop, the massive plane tree, and the running dervish with elbows jutting anticipate the formulae of early Mughal painting. Welch has assigned this picture to the late 1530s or early 1540s, noting the maturity of its style in contrast to the *Shahnameh* page.⁵ Another painting, which will be discussed at greater length elsewhere in this article, can be assigned to 'Abd us-Samad working at Tabriz. Thought by Welch to have been removed from an album compiled in 1544-45 by Dust Muhammad for Bahram Mirza, the "Standing horse and groom" (figure 3) bears an ascription to 'Abd us-Samad and is datable on the basis of style to the mid-1530s.⁶ Finally, S.C. Welch has noted two illustrations to a Hilali manuscript of 1537-38 as the work of 'Abd us-Samad.⁷

Fortunately, the lack of documentation for 'Abd us-Samad's Tabriz period is balanced by a substantial number of mentions in Mughal sources. His early years with Humayun come to life in the account of Bayazid Bayat, whose late sixteenth-century text reproduced the letter from Humayun to Rashid Khan of Kashghar in which 'Abd us-Samad is discussed.⁸ Humayun especially appreciated the artist's minute depiction of a polo match and a feast in a hall on grains of rice and a horseman on a poppy seed. Presumably, such

1. "Hunting scene".
Attributed to 'Abd us-Samad. Circa 1585.
Catherine and Ralph Benkaim Collection.

fine work earned 'Abd us-Samad the sobriquet "Shirin Qalam", or "Sweet Pen". Virtuoso feats may have been 'Abd us-Samad's stock in trade since he also completed a picture in half a day on New Year's Day 1551. By about 1555, when 'Abd us-Samad painted Prince Akbar (b. 1542) presenting a painting to Humayun, he was well-established as Akbar's art teacher and a leading court artist.⁹

With Humayun's establishment of Delhi as his capital and Akbar's accession to the throne in 1556, 'Abd us-Samad's success continued. In addition to a painting inscribed on New Year's Day 1557,¹⁰ 'Abd us-Samad has been considered by many scholars as the artist of the large painting on cloth, "Princes of the House of Timur" of circa 1555-56.¹¹ He also was instrumental in Akbar's major manuscript commission, the twelve-volume *Hamzanama*. Until recently work on the *Hamzanama* was thought to have begun about 1562, but new research has shown that the project was initiated soon after Akbar's accession.¹² Mir Sayyid 'Ali, who had come to India with 'Abd us-Samad, supervised the *Hamzanama* until he left India to make the pilgrimage to Mecca. At that point, about 1572, 'Abd us-Samad became supervisor of the project and efficiently saw it to completion about 1577.

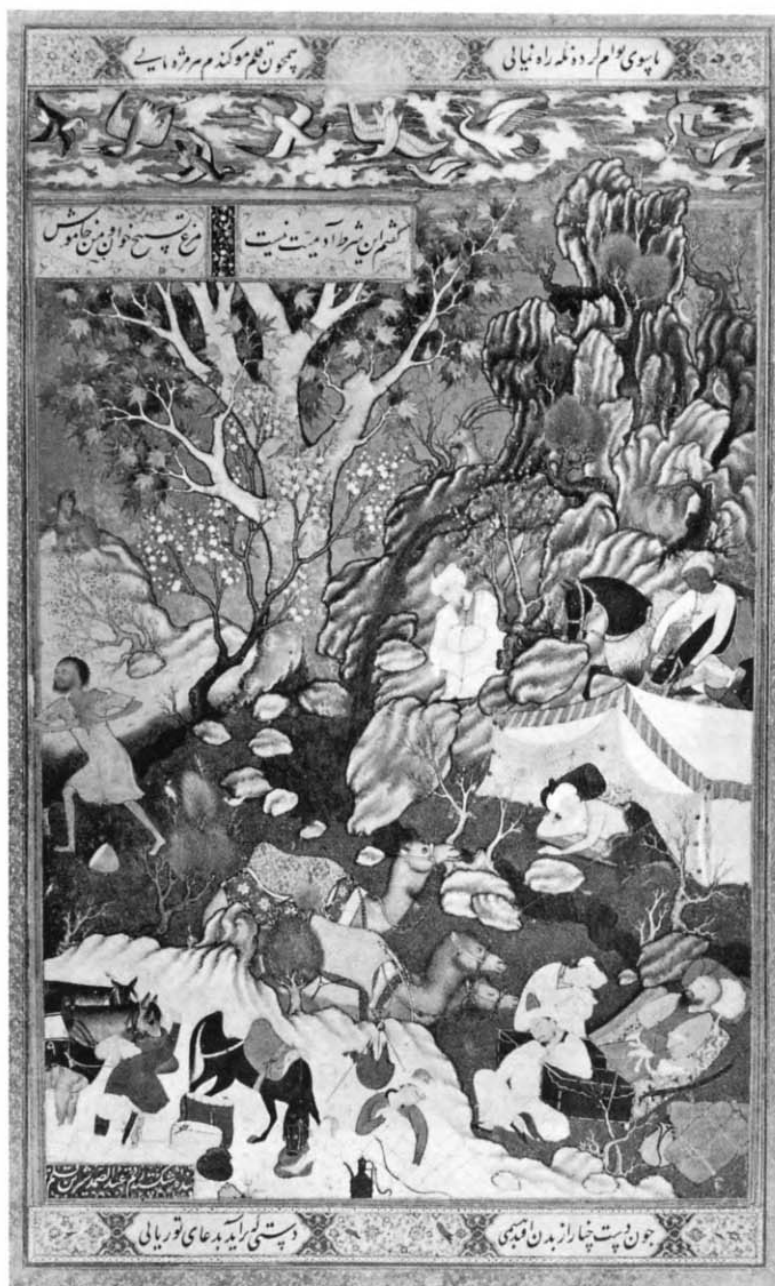
Akbar must have appreciated 'Abd us-Samad's competence as an organizer for he appointed the artist to a succession of posts from the late 1570s onward. In the time-honoured fashion of civil servants on the rise, 'Abd us-Samad progressed from superintendency of the mint at Fatehpur Sikri, Akbar's capital (1572-85), to responsibility for leathern articles, to one of the deputyships of the imperial household. Apparently noted for his thrift and honesty, 'Abd us-Samad was appointed Divan of Multan in 1587, seemingly his last official position. While serving as an administrator for Akbar, 'Abd us-Samad also taught many of the court artists and continued to paint for both Akbar and his nobles.

When working for Humayun, 'Abd us-Samad retained a pronounced Persian style. Humayuni turbans and birds flying in a row notwithstanding, the restrained, doll-like figures, compositions borrowed from the pictorial canon of the Tabriz court style, and the absence of modelling represent a continuation of practices honed in Safavid Iran (figure 4). The accession of Akbar, however, had a marked effect on 'Abd us-Samad's style. Art historians have continued to debate the meaning of historian Abu'l Fazl's statement, "... his perfection was mainly due to the wonderful effect of a look of His Majesty, which caused him to turn from that which is form to that which is spirit."¹³ Although Robert Skelton has recently noted *ma'ani* can be translated as "reality" as well as "spirit", the undeniable point of the passage is that Akbar caused 'Abd us-Samad's style to change.

By the 1580s, after the completion of the *Hamzanama*, 'Abd us-Samad had greatly increased the use of shading for the modelling of faces and he had developed a characteristic manner of stippling for grass and rocks.¹⁴ The rocks themselves no longer soar two-dimensionally to the sky as in the "Dervish who cried out" (see figure 2). Rather they now appear piled in a massive jumble of large and small boulders, all covered with a thin layer of moss or lichen. While attempting to accommodate Akbar's vision of naturalism, 'Abd us-Samad retained both the technical perfection and a reserved attitude to his subjects that characterized Persian painting of the mid-sixteenth century. Although his work exhibits a certain lack of passion, it, or at least 'Abd us-Samad himself, exerted a strong influence on younger Mughal artists, such as Daswanth and probably Basawan. Apparently 'Abd us-Samad was better at extracting from others the desired "reality" than he was at expressing it himself.

'Abd us-Samad's works have been listed elsewhere,¹⁵ but some points about their chronology bear mentioning. After the several signed and dated works of the 1550s none is signed or dated again until the 1580s. Although scholars have attributed one or two paintings to the 1570s (figure 5), the 1560s remain a blank in 'Abd us-Samad's career. The

2. "Dervish who cried out with nature in praise of God while his fellow travellers slept". Detached page from a *Gulistan* of Sa'di, in the Gulshan Album, Gulistan Palace Library, Tehran, ascribed to "al-'abd shikasteh raqam 'Abd us-Samad Shirin Qalam". Circa 1540, Tabriz. From Binyon, Wilkinson, and Gray, *Persian Miniature Painting*. A231.



only explanation for this is that he was working full-time on the *Hamzanama* and that if he did any other work, it is now lost. In the 1580s and '90s 'Abd us-Samad continued to participate in manuscript projects, but he contributed no more than one or two illustrations to any single manuscript. Presumably his administrative duties kept him from devoting full attention to painting. Illustrations by 'Abd us-Samad would have added value to manuscripts by virtue of his position as a founding father of the Mughal school. However, by the 1580s he was no longer at the forefront of innovation. Younger, more daring artists were busy formulating the Akbari manuscript style and grappling with European art rather than toeing 'Abd us-Samad's more conservative, more Persian line.

Despite his transition from Persian to Mughal painter, 'Abd us-Samad developed certain formulae early on which remained unchanged throughout his career. Perhaps the most typical of these "trademarks" are his horses. From his Safavid "Horse and groom" (see figure 3) to his Mughal multi-figure scenes (see figures 1, 8, 9, and 11), the confirmation of 'Abd us-Samad's horses remains constant. Their heads are small and fine, their mouths are often open, as if neighing, and their girths and hindquarters are disproportionately

large in relation to their forequarters. Dappled grey horses were favourites of 'Abd us-Samad but dark-skinned horses and even a piebald mount figure in his oeuvre as well.

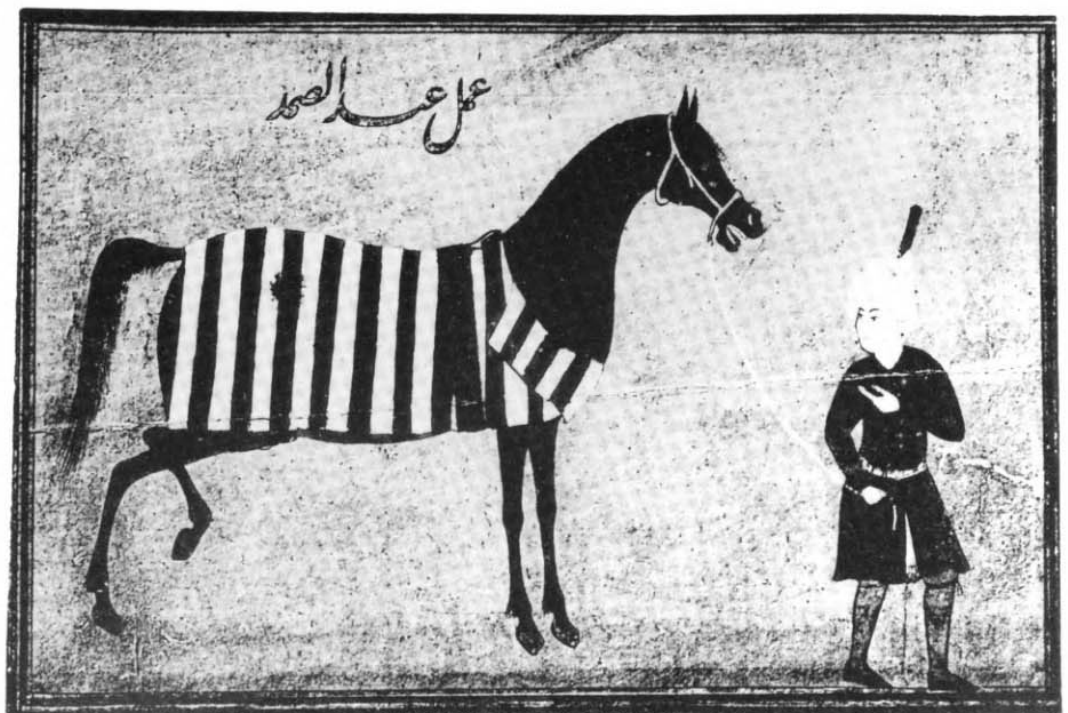
Trade, war, recreation, and communication depended to a great extent on horses, and it is no surprise that the Safavids and Mughals prized them as highly as people today do automobiles. As the primary means of transport in pre-industrial Iran and India, they are ubiquitous in manuscript illustration. What makes horses more significant in the work of 'Abd us-Samad than in that of other artists is the preponderance of horse and groom pictures among his album pages and the dominant role of horses in several paintings of apparently narrative content. Assuming the survival of so many horse pictures is not accidental, one is led to inquire why 'Abd us-Samad chose to depict them so often. Furthermore, what significance did horses have for Akbar and other courtly patrons and could their presence in 'Abd us-Samad's work be symbolic as well as narrative or reportorial?

Conclusions concerning 'Abd us-Samad's motivation for depicting horses are speculative or at best extrapolated from the available texts and pictures. Having developed a formula for horses early in his career, 'Abd us-Samad must have felt entirely confident to portray them in a variety of settings. Even his painting of a polo match on a grain of rice featured seven horses and his picture on a poppy seed depicted a horseman. Since these must have been presented to Humayun as proof of 'Abd us-Samad's talent, he must have been identified as a horse painter from his arrival at the Mughal court. While he also distinguished himself as a painter of multi-figure scenes (see figure 2), his horse pictures must have been recognized by a variety of patrons. As Verma has shown, 'Abd us-Samad worked for Mughal noblemen as well as Akbar and Humayun, so various patrons may have asked him to reproduce the types of compositions for which he was famous.¹⁶

'Abd us-Samad's horse pictures fall into four categories: (1) depictions of horses and grooms alone (figures 3, 5, and 6); (2) paintings depicting hermits as well as the horse and groom (figures 7-9); (3) hunting scenes (figures 1 and 10); and (4) compositions in which horses function as a repoussoir, drawing the eye into the composition (figures 2, 4, and 11). In categories 1 and 2 horses are the subject or at least the focus of the picture, whereas in categories 3 and 4 they are necessary but subsidiary elements of the composition. The three horse-and-groom pictures illustrated here portray the animals

3. "Standing horse and groom". Possibly from the Bahram Mirza Album, ascribed to 'Abd us-Samad. Mid to late 1530s, Tabriz. Ex-collection Edwin Binney 3rd. From Armenag Beg Sakisian, *La Miniature persane*, fig. 155.

4. "Humayun and Akbar in a garden pavilion". From the Gulshan Album, signed by 'Abd us-Samad Shirin Qalam. Circa 1555, Delhi? Gulistan Palace Library, Tehran.





standing, running, and walking, all with their mouths open and teeth bared. The Safavid groom stands and beckons to the horse whereas the Mughal grooms run grasping the reins close to the bit. The running horse has a saddle and cover, called a *ghashiya*, and the other two are cloaked in saddle-cloths encircled by surcingle.

Before the mid-sixteenth century most but not all depictions of horses and grooms were produced in connection with portraits of kings. In an incisive article Grace Guest and Richard Ettinghausen have traced the motif of the sleeping groom and horse from Sassanian times to the sixteenth century in Iran.¹⁷ Paintings of horses and grooms divorced from text and produced for inclusion in albums came into vogue in the second third of the sixteenth century. Unlike the sleeping or waiting grooms and horses on medieval ceramics, metalwork, and in manuscripts, these horses and grooms appear to be portraits of important horses as much as symbols of the royal personages who owned them. Almost all of the horses 'Abd us-Samad portrayed singly were stallions, presumably valued as much for their breeding potential as for their speed or elegance. Priscilla Soucek has suggested that 'Abd us-Samad painted horses that were given as *nauruz* gifts (an unpublished horse and groom picture was completed on *nauruz*).¹⁸ However, his pictures may portray significant stud horses and as such would have served as records of the sires of various bloodlines.

Apparently, 'Abd us-Samad introduced to Indian painting the vogue for horses and grooms as a subject unconnected to a narrative sequence. To learn more of the identity of 'Abd us-Samad's horses, one must turn to the writings of Akbar's court historian, Abu'l Fazl. Because of the value and multiple uses of horses at the Mughal court, Abu'l Fazl devoted several sections of his *A'in-i Akbari* to describing Akbar's royal stables. Moreover, much of his discussion of the army centred on the number and type of horses to which men of different ranks were entitled. Horses from "Iraq-i 'Arab and Iraq-i 'Ajam, from Turkey, Turkestan, Badakhshan, Shirwan, Qirghiz, Thibet, Kashmir, and other countries were brought to court" where the private (*khasa*) and general stables held twelve thousand horses.¹⁹ Although 'Abd us-Samad held a post of *mansabdar* of four hundred horse, the horses in his paintings most likely belonged to the six *khasa* stables, each of which contained "forty choice horses of Arabia and Persia; the stables of the princes; the stables of Turkish courier horses; the stables of horses bred in the imperial studs. They each have a name, but do not exceed the number thirty. His Majesty rides upon horses of the six stables."²⁰

Continuing the ancient tradition identified by Guest and Ettinghausen, Akbar "always kept in readiness two *khasa* horses" in addition to courier horses and others of lesser value, which formed four divisions.²¹ Whenever Akbar rode a horse from one of the *khasa* stables, he would pay the grooms and other people in charge of the stable, the amount depending on the rank of the stable. Likewise, the stables were compensated for horses given away as presents. Though stallions to a stud of mares were worth the same as *khasa* horses, those termed "stud-bred" were among the least valuable of the imperial steeds. Such a distinction between a sire and his young seems odd, but suggests that the royal stud was intended for keeping numbers of horses up and that stallions were valued more highly than mares.

'Abd us-Samad was probably already aware of horses kept in readiness at the royal stable when he moved from Iran to India. In addition to the practical necessity of a ruler being able to flee or ride to battle at a moment's notice, the horse in readiness was put to a more symbolic use at the court of Shah Tahmasp. Michele Membré, a Venetian sent to Iran to deliver a message from the Doge to Shah Tahmasp, described the following situation at the Shah's court in 1539:

The King has a sister in his house who he does not want to be married,
because, he says, he is keeping her to be the wife of the Mahdi. This Mahdi is



5. "Horse and groom".
Attributed to 'Abd us-Samad. Circa 1575.
Gouache on paper. The
Metropolitan Museum of
Art, Fletcher Fund, 1925
(25.68.3).

a descendant of 'Ali and Muhammad;.... Thus, too, he has a white horse, which he keeps for the said Mahdi, which has a cloth of crimson velvet, and silver shoes; sometimes pure gold ones. No one rides this horse and they always put it in front of all his horses.²²

Since the Shah fervently believed that the Mahdi would come, his preparation was logical. Membre's account, furthermore, underscores the abiding power of the horse in readiness to symbolize royalty, both of the temporal and spiritual realm.

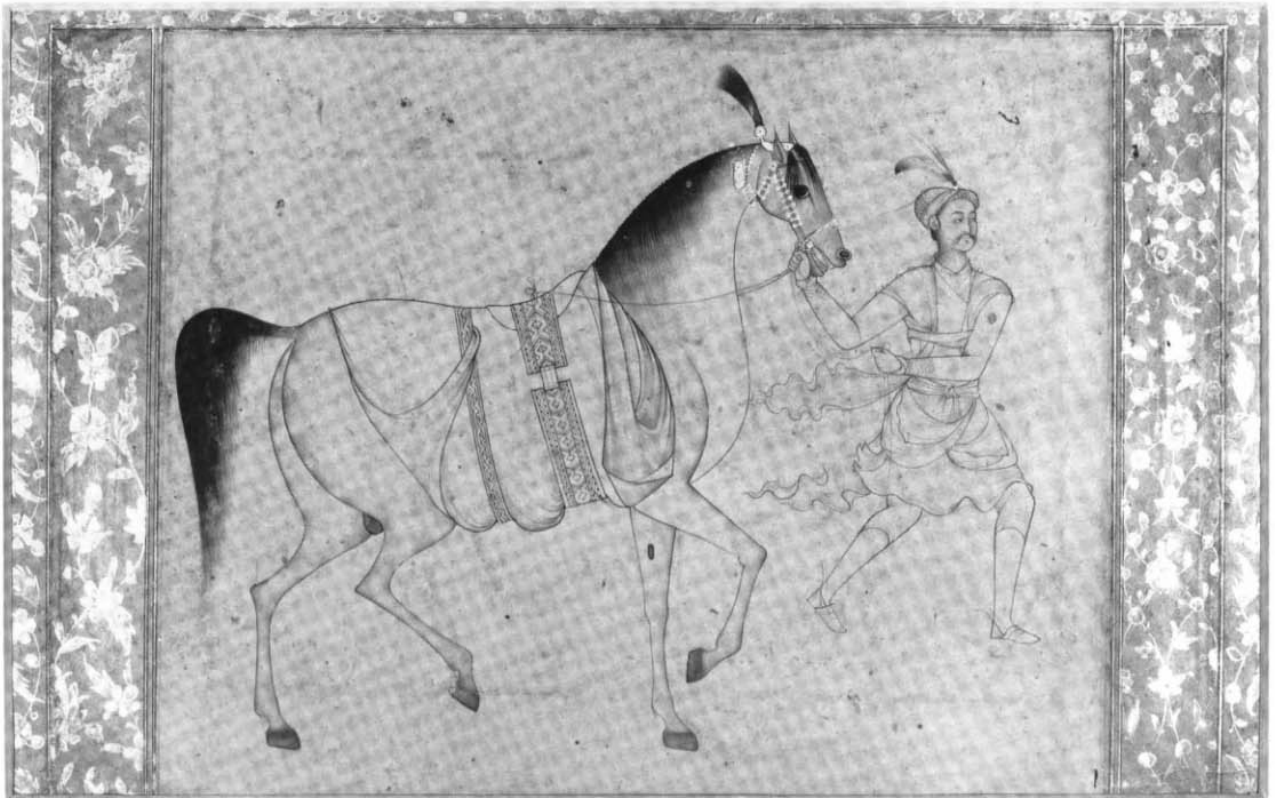
Within the Shiite context of Shah Tahmasp's court, the horse in readiness may also have called to mind the riderless horse in the story of the Battle of Karbala. There in the desert on the tenth of Muharram, AD 680, Husayn, the grandson of Muhammad and son of 'Ali, and his band of followers were attacked and massacred by the troops of the Sunni Caliph Yazid. Before the battle Husayn and his companions had tethered their horses so that when the attack began, they fought on foot against the mounted army of Yazid. Shah Tahmasp's white riderless horse thus could have symbolized Husayn's martyrdom which, along with the deaths of the other martyred Shiite imams, is a central theme of Iranian Shiism.

Presumably, even if 'Abd us-Samad incorporated Shiite iconography in his early horse portrait (see figure 3), which seems unlikely as the horse is neither hobbled nor white, he may have suppressed or dissimulated his own Shiism when he joined the Sunni court of Humayun. He is thought to have converted to the Din Ilahi, the heterodox religion conceived in 1582 by Akbar, which borrowed from Christianity and Hinduism as well as Islam. The historian Badaoni complained that 'Abd us-Samad was "much occupied with ceremonial prayers and feasts, and with supererogatory prayers and outward devotions" when he should have been thinking of the "orthodox successors of the Prophet".²³ Whether 'Abd us-Samad's actions represent Shiite or Din Ilahi observance, he suffered no known ill-favour at the hands of religiously tolerant Akbar.

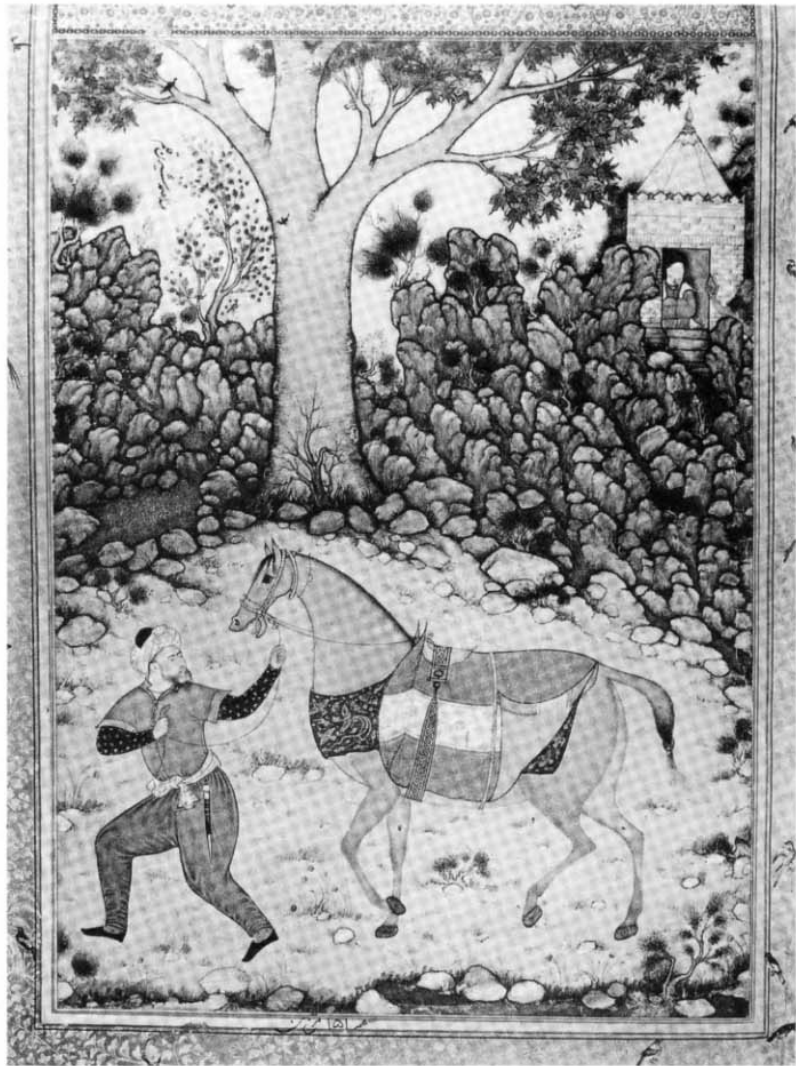
'Abd us-Samad's more complex compositions in which the horse and groom are shown in a landscape with a hermit and another figure who holds a book (figure 7) or with a prince visiting a hermit at his cave (figure 8), challenge us to unravel their iconography. In both works the horse and groom are displayed prominently while the hermits and additional figures are relatively small and placed less conspicuously within the landscape. The simple interpretation of both scenes would be that they are either horse portraits embellished with landscape and extra figures or that "Prince and a hermit" (figure 8), at least, represents an incident in a narrative or an actual historical moment in the life of one of the Mughal royalty. Yet, the presence of the hermits, one in a tomb-shaped structure discoursing with an ascetic and the other conversing with the prince (figure 9), suggests a spiritual dimension to the paintings.

Discussing "Prince and a hermit", Anthony Welch has noted that mighty stallions symbolized "worldly pomp and power" as well as "worldly impermanence" in an Iranian Sufi context.²⁴ The same words could apply equally to the horse in figure 7. Without knowing who is depicted in this painting, one can hardly go beyond generalizations about the meaning of the picture. Shaykhs and wise men were highly respected and in some cases extremely influential in Mughal society. Two of Badaoni's mentions of 'Abd us-Samad concern his favourable interaction with noted shaykhs.²⁵ Moreover, at Fatehpur Sikri, Akbar had established a forum at which men of all faiths were encouraged to discuss philosophy and religion. The spiritual leaders listed by Abu'l Fazl and discussed at greater length by Badaoni were most respected when they understood the mysteries of both the exoteric, or material, and esoteric worlds.²⁶ Assuming the "Horse and groom" (figure 7) represents more than a horse and a groom in the countryside, could it not express the contrast between the temporal and spiritual worlds, symbolized, respectively, by the horse and the hermit? With an irony analogous to that of sixteenth-century Persian poetry, the imposing horse is a sign of impermanence while the shaykh and his associate, tucked into a corner of the painting, suggest the higher spiritual plane to be attained through prayer, meditation, and asceticism.

6. "Horse and groom". Attributed to 'Abd us-Samad. Circa 1585. Drawing on paper. Musée du Louvre, on long loan to the Musée Guimet, Paris. Photograph: copyright R.M.N./Mr Ravaux.



7. "Horse and groom".
From the Gulshan Album,
ascribed to 'Abd us-Samad
Shirin Qalam. Circa 1580.
Gulistan Palace Library,
Tehran. Photograph: The
British Museum, London.



In "Prince and a hermit" (figures 8 and 9), a prince visits a hermit in a cave as his attendants return from a hunt. The asceticism and probable vegetarianism of the hermit, who is seated next to a large bird, a doe and her fawn, and his companion (at the right edge of the painting), contrasts with the worldly, animal-hunting, meat-eating prince and the symbol of his power, the horse. The falconer's drum mounted on the saddle, the men at the right who carry props and the unseen game in cloth slung from a pole, and the man at the left holding the prince's sheathed arms all emphasize the theme of the hunt. Scenes of princes visiting shaykhs were common in sixteenth-century Persian and Mughal manuscripts, often illustrating stories from the life of Alexander the Great, who met with wise men in caves on several occasions.

Instead of depicting an incident in a fictional narrative, this painting may refer more specifically to an event that occurred in Akbar's life in April-May 1578. In late April Akbar resolved to have a great hunt near Bhera in the Punjab. He ordered his officers and nobles to make an enclosure that would stretch from Bhera to Girjhak (Jalalpur), "said to be the Bucephalus [sic] of Alexander".²⁷ After ten days of preparation the hunt, called a *qamargha*, was ready to commence.

According to Abu'l Fazl, while hunting, Akbar "was holding self-conflicts in the pleasant place where the quarry had fallen.... As attainment follows upon search, the lamp of vision became brilliant. A sublime joy took possession of his bodily frame. The attraction (*jazaba*) of cognition of God cast its ray."²⁸ This profound religious experience caused Akbar to call off the hunt and "in thanksgiving for this great boon [he] set free



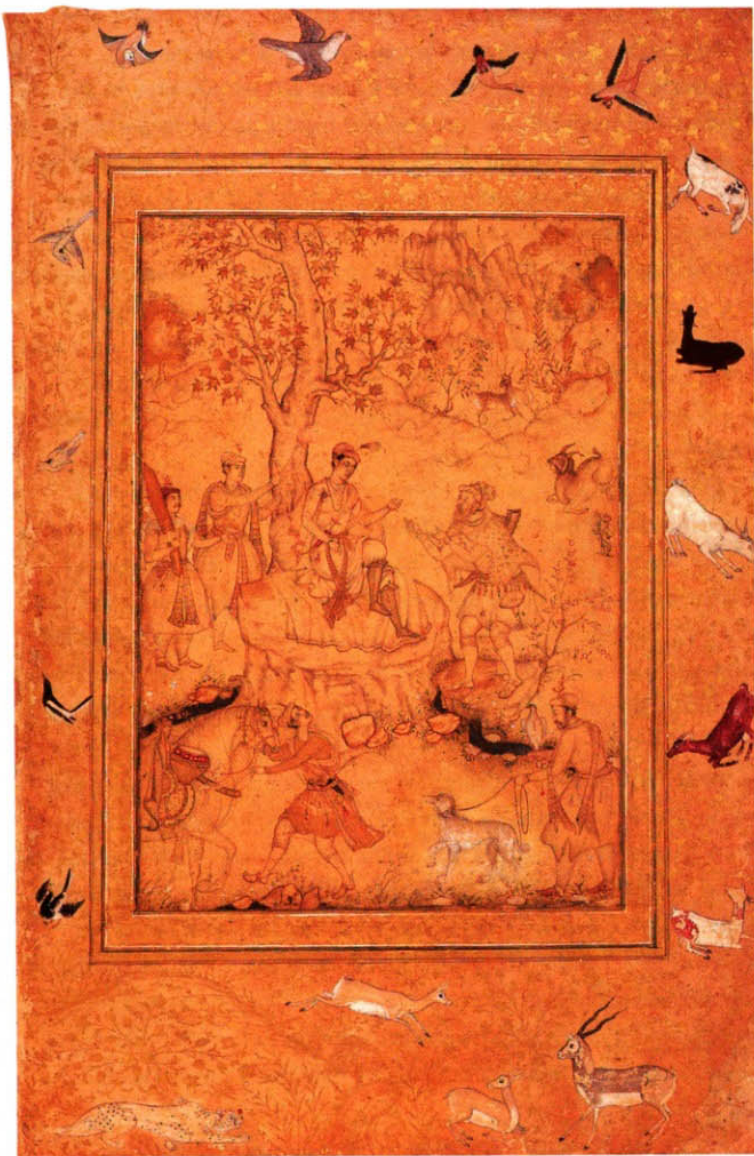


many thousands of animals. Active men made every endeavour that no one should touch the feather of a finch and that they should allow all the animals to depart according to their habits." Akbar's close companions were unsure of what had prompted his enlightenment. Some thought he had encountered "in these inspiring fields one of the pious anchorites and had gained his desire", or that he had "met in with one of the holy spirits", meaning that he had had a vision, or that the animals had somehow "imparted Divine secrets to him".²⁹ Following this event, Akbar nearly became an ascetic himself, but instead he "conformed somewhat to the practices (of the ascetics)" by cutting his long hair. This act symbolized his retreat from native Indian or Hindu practices to acceptance of the customs of his Central Asian Muslim ancestors.³⁰

Even though the prince bears little resemblance to known portraits of Akbar, 'Abd us-Samad may have intended to present him in an idealized fashion so that he could also be perceived as a modern Alexander, a well-known metaphor for Persian and Mughal kings. This identification with Alexander is further suggested by the locale in which the hunt and Akbar's change of heart took place, a region which Alexander himself had conquered as a result of one of his most famous battles. Here at Alexander's defeat of the army of Porus, his beloved horse, Bucephalus, had died, leading him to found a city, Bucephala, in his name. Like Rakhsh and Shabdiz, the horses of Persian myth, Bucephalus was the source of numerous legends, including one in which he was the sire of all the horses of the Pamir mountains. While 'Abd us-Samad's composition may represent an actual occurrence, or what some of Akbar's circle believed to have happened, it also would have had resonances of Alexander's encounters with hermits.

8. "Prince and a hermit". Ascribed to Mir Sayyid 'Ali but attributed here to 'Abd us-Samad. Circa 1580. Collection of Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan, Geneva, M.69.

9. Detail of figure 8.



11. "Akbar and a dervish". Ascribed to 'Abd us-Samad. Circa 1586-87. Collection of Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan, Geneva, M.147.



12. "Horse and groom". Mughal? Eighteenth century. Copyright The British Museum, London, 1974. 6-17 021(83).

The prominence of the horse, which may be a veiled allusion to Bucephalus, also connects with an event in Akbar's life one month before the revelatory *qamargha*. "Apparently it was in this way that one night when he [Akbar] was coming back to the camp from hunting, his horse stumbled. He, the wise and foreseeing one, regarded this as a message from God, and prostrated himself in devotion. A new foundation was laid for Divine worship."³¹ Although Akbar was not to announce the Din Ilahi for another four years, he certainly was highly attuned to spiritual matters in the preceding years, as the two incidents recounted here attest. 'Abd us-Samad, his trusted official and former teacher, must have been well aware of Akbar's state of mind. Thus, if Akbar himself could consider a horse's stumbling a sign from God and if a month later an epiphany on a hunt could bring him to the brink of becoming an ascetic, 'Abd us-Samad, apparently a specialist in painting horses, could well have been commissioned to evoke, if not literally portray, these events.

In "Hunting scene" (figure 1) from a few years later in the 1580s, the horses participate in the action or, in the case of the dappled grey in the foreground, wait with a groom, but they do not seem to have any extra symbolic importance. The horses and grooms are the focus of the two tiers of the composition; the stasis of horses in the foreground contrasts with the cantering piebald horse and attendants running before him. While 'Abd us-Samad may have intended to contrast the dead bird in the foreground with the live and flapping hawk above, the two vignettes also illustrate the different stages of a hunt.

The theme of "Akbar and a dervish" (figure 11) may relate more closely to that of figures 8 and 9 than to the "Hunting scene" (figure 1). Here again, the hunt has come to a halt while the prince, Akbar, holds an audience with a dervish.³² The horse, awaiting its master, forms a repoussoir, leading one's eye into the centre of the picture where the prince is seated. Anthony Welch has noted that the dervish may be a member of the Khaksar order, which had developed in India.³³ Unlike figures 8 and 9, the relationship of the prince to the dervish is more politically conventional, with the prince seated on a natural throne above the standing dervish who exhorts him from below. Here the horse does not dominate the composition and thus can only be considered the chattel and, by extension, the emblem of the prince.

In "Khusrau hunting", fol. 82a from the Dyson-Perrins *Khamseh* of Nizami of 1595 (figure 10), the horses provide the balance between movement and inaction found in the "Hunting scene" (figure 1). However, here the stability of the upper register with Khusrau and an associate hawking contrasts with the dynamic middle ground in which two horsemen and their dogs chase deer, rabbits, and fox. The animals and people in the foreground draw the viewer into the scene. Because this picture illustrates a familiar story, there is no expectation of a symbolism beyond the well-known tale. Rather, 'Abd us-Samad used his established conventions for horses, rocks, human figures, and even composition to render a dynamic scene, as if to prove that in advanced old age he was still a master.

Like his contemporary, the Persian artist Muhammadi of Herat, 'Abd us-Samad exerted a powerful influence on other artists of his school that exceeded his own talent. He introduced to Indian painting the idea of portraying horses and grooms as independent pictures devoid of narrative content. Subsequently, the genre became popular in provincial and non-Mughal schools of Indian painting (figure 12) and was a means of celebrating special horses. 'Abd us-Samad's non-narrative multi-figure pictures, especially figures 7 and 8, resonate with meaning which one must assume was evident to the sixteenth-century patrons of such works. Here the horses are crucial to the understanding of the paintings.

Finally, in his few manuscript pages, horses contribute to the rhythm of the composition. Although none of the available texts notes 'Abd us-Samad's propensity for

depicting horses, the pen-name of his son, Sharif, was "Farisi",³¹ which is both a horseman and a Persian. One wonders if "Farisi" applied not only to 'Abd us-Samad's origins, since he, not Sharif, was born in Shiraz, but also to the reputation of 'Abd us-Samad as a "horse man", a painter of horses. With only a handful of written references and the numerous horses which lope across 'Abd us-Samad's works, it is tempting to imagine him as the original "Farisi" of the family.

Notes

1. Heather Elgood, "Who Painted 'Princes of the House of Timur?'" and Robert Skelton, "Iranian Artists in the Service of Humayun", in Sheila Canby, ed., *Humayun's Garden Party: Princes of the House of Timur and Early Mughal Painting* (Bombay 1994), pp. 9-48; Som Prakash Verma, *Mughal Painters and their Work* (Delhi 1994), pp. 40-46; Amina Okada, *Imperial Mughal Painters* (Paris 1992), pp. 62-68; and less recently, P.P. Soucek, "'Abd al-Samad Shirazi'", *Encyclopedia Iranica* (London 1982), vol. I, fasc. 2, pp. 162-67.
2. Martin Bernard Dickson and Stuart Cary Welch, *The Houghton Shahnameh* (Cambridge, Mass. 1981), vol. I, pp. 192-200; and Milo Cleveland Beach, *The Imperial Image: Paintings for the Mughal Court* (Washington, DC 1981), pp. 164-67.
3. Verma, op. cit., p. 40, quotes a letter from Humayun to Rashid Khan, King of Kashghar, saying that 'Abd us-Samad and Mir Sayyid 'Ali arrived in Kabul in 1551-52. However, the 1549 date appears to be accurate because 'Abd us-Samad was captured and held by Prince Kamran for several months in 957/1550-51. He had returned to Humayun's court by 958/1551. A more specific reconstruction of this period is given in Dickson and Welch, op. cit., p. 253, n. 4.
4. Ibid., vol. I, pp. 192-93; vol. II, pl. 260.
5. Ibid., vol. I, p. 193.
6. Ibid., vol. I, p. 193, where the painting is assigned to circa 1530. The album is in the Topkapı Saray Library, Istanbul, H2154.
7. Ibid., vol. I, p. 255, n. 1.
8. Verma, op. cit., pp. 40-41.
9. For illustration, see Elgood, op. cit., p. 20, fig. 8.
10. L. Binyon, J.V.S. Wilkinson, and B. Gray, *Persian Miniature Painting* (Oxford 1933), no. 233. This is another "Groom leading a horse", mounted with "Majnun in the desert".
11. See Canby, ed., op. cit., especially Toby Falk, "'Princes of the House of Timur': The Written Record", pp. 1-8, and Skelton, op. cit., pp. 33-48, with a different view expressed by Elgood, op. cit., pp. 9-32.
12. Pramod Chandra, *The Tutinama of the Cleveland Museum of Art and the Origins of Mughal Painting* (Graz 1976), pp. 62-72; John Seyller, "A dated Hamzanama illustration", *Artibus Asiae* (1993), LIII, 3/4, pp. 503-05.
13. Abu'l Fazl 'Allami, *The A'in-i Akbari*, trans. H. Blochmann (New Delhi 1927, 1977 reprint), vol. I, p. 114.
14. Beach, op. cit., cat. no. 16d verso, "Jamshid writing on a rock", dated 1588. ill. p. 165 and col. rep. p. 73.
15. Beach, op. cit., pp. 166-67; Verma, op. cit., pp. 44-46.
16. Verma, op. cit., p. 42.
17. Grace Guest and Richard Ettinghausen, "The iconography of a Kashan lustre plate", *Art Orientalis* (1961), vol. IV, pp. 32-42.
18. Soucek, op. cit., p. 163.
19. Abu'l Fazl 'Allami, op. cit., vol. I, p. 140.
20. Ibid., p. 141.
21. Ibid., p. 149.
22. Michele Membre, *Mission to the Lord Sophy of Persia (1539-1542)*, trans. A.H. Morton (London 1993), pp. 25-26.
23. al-Badaoni, *Muntakhabu'l-Tawarikh*, trans. W. Haig (Calcutta 1913), vol. III, p. 196.
24. A. Welch and S.C. Welch, *Arts of the Islamic Book: The collection of Sadruddin Aga Khan* (Ithaca and London 1982), p. 160.
25. al-Badaoni, op. cit., pp. 85 and 196.
26. Abu'l Fazl 'Allami, op. cit., vol. I, pp. 606-11; al-Badaoni, op. cit., vol. III, p. 223.
27. Abu'l Fazl 'Allami, *The Akbar Nama of Abu'l Fazl*, trans. H. Beveridge (Calcutta 1902-39, 1989 reprint), vol. III, p. 346, n. 1. Beveridge has identified the Mughal town with Bucephalus.
28. Ibid., pp. 346-47.
29. Ibid., p. 347.
30. Ibid., p. 348.
31. Ibid., p. 338.
32. I have recently reread the inscription to the right of the dervish which identifies the sitter as a likeness of Akbar not his son Salim, and the artist as 'Abd us-Samad. The style of the drawing has much in common with that of Basawan, thought to have been either a student or a close follower of 'Abd us-Samad. For the purpose of this article, which is not primarily concerned with stylistic analysis, the drawing is accepted as the work of 'Abd us-Samad.
33. A. Welch and S.C. Welch, op. cit., pp. 165 and 167, n. 1 where it is noted that Prof. Annemarie Schimmel has identified the type of dervish.
34. al-Badaoni, op. cit., vol. III, p. 429.



Mir Sayyed 'Ali: Painter of the Past and Pioneer of the Future

A.S. Melikian-Chirvani

Few figures quite compare in importance with Mir Sayyed 'Ali in the Indo-Iranian symbiosis that gave rise to the Islamic culture of Hindustan. If any one artist could be claimed to have laid the foundation stone of the school of book painting known as Moghul, he is the one.

Yet, despite the aura of fame that surrounds him, many basic facts regarding his life and career elude us.

Painter and poet

The dates of Mir Sayyed 'Ali's birth and death are nowhere to be found. The information to be culled from written sources, all in Persian, about his activity as a painter, is scanty. "His career developed in Tabriz and, under the aegis of the King of Kings [i.e. Shah Tahmasp of Iran (1524-76)], he became pre-eminent in figural painting (*tasvir*)," Abo'l Fazl 'Allami briefly notes in the "Akbarian ceremonial" (*A'in-e Akbari*).¹ Thanks to the "Rosegarden of Art" (*Golestan-e Honar*) by the Iranian historian Qazi Ahmad, we know that Mir Mosavver, his father, was also the artist's master.² And that is about as much as can be gathered regarding Mir Sayyed 'Ali's Iranian period.

According to Bayazid Bayat, a chronicler who was contemporary with the artist, Mir Sayyed 'Ali left the Iranian court when Homayun, the son of the first Moghul ruler Babar, who had just gained control of Kabul, issued a royal edict "bidding Mir Sayyed 'Ali and Molla 'Abd os-Samad *mosavver* [the figure painter] to come."³ The chronicler adds that much later, in Lahore in AH 999 (October 30, 1590 to October 18, 1591), 'Abd os-Samad showed him a letter that Homayun had sent to the ruler of Kashghar, Rashid Khan. In it, the Moghul informed Rashid Khan that the two artists had entered his service in Shawal 959 (September 20-October 18, 1552).⁴ The information supplied by Bayazid quoting from Homayun's own letter should be accepted in preference to a date corresponding to the year 1549, put forward by later writers (see note 4).

The letter contains two other important indications. After remarking that Mir Sayyed 'Ali *mosavver* "qualifies as The Rarity of Our Time" (*Nader ol-'Asri*), he describes a polo scene which the master painted on a grain of rice, and records a distich that he painted between the two polo posts "at each end of the grain" (*Hazaj metre*):

Into one grain, there came a hundred harvests

A whole world came about in the heart of a single grain of millet

And, at the end, he wrote "al-'abd [the servant] Sayyed 'Ali in the month of Rajab of the year 959/June 23-July 22, 1552".⁵

As will be seen, "Sayyed 'Ali" is indeed the name appearing in his signature — *Mir*, a courtesy title, would be used by others referring to him, not by the artist himself. Most importantly, the couplet quoted by Homayun matches Mir Sayyed 'Ali's habit of coining or quoting a distich relating to his theme and painting it into his image.

During the first year of his reign, Akbar took part in painting sessions in the studio (*tasvirkhane*) under the guidance of Mir Sayyed 'Ali and 'Abd os-Samad, as Abo'l Fazl writes in the "Book of Akbar" (*Akbar-Name*).⁶ Bada'uni, the author of the "Selected Chronicles" (*Montakhab ot-Tavarikh*), states that an illustrated *Hamze-Name* in sixteen volumes was executed "under the care" of Mir Sayyed 'Ali, but adds no further details.⁷

Most remarkable perhaps is the emphasis laid on Mir Sayyed 'Ali as a poet. This is how he is entered by Nezam od-Din Ahmad in the "Akbarian Classes" (*Tabaqat-e Akbari*), by Abo'l Fazl in the *A'in-e Akbari*, and by Bada'uni, each time under his pen-name Joda'i.⁸ In all, his accomplishments as a figural artist are highly praised, but only in second position. Nezam od-Din mentions him in his long "Account of the poets who had a nom-de-plume attached to their 'Collected Poems'" (*Divan*) and Bada'uni explicitly states that "he completed a *Divan*".⁹ The verses they cite indeed show that Mir Sayyed 'Ali, or rather

1. Self-portrait of Mir Sayyed 'Ali, probably painted in Lahore between August 1555 and January 1556. Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Bequest of Edwin Binney 3rd, M. 90.141.1.

"Joda'i", was an accomplished poet with a mystical strain of Sufi inspiration and another vein in an intricate and ornate mode.

One of the couplets quoted by several sources is important because it implicitly suggests that Mir Sayyed 'Ali might have painted leaves on the theme of "the Rose and the Nightingale", in Persian, *Gol-o bolbol* (*Ramal* metre):

Sobh' dam khar' dam az hamdami-e gol mizad

Nakhoni dar del-e sad pare-ye bolbol mizad

At dawn, the thorn breathed a few words about its companionship with
the rose

It dug its nail into the nightingale's breast torn into a hundred pieces

The nature and whereabouts of Mir Sayyed 'Ali's activities in later years remain uncertain. Amin Ahmad Razi wrote in his anthology "The Seven Climes" (*Haft Eqlim*) completed in 1018 (April 6, 1609 to March 25, 1610), that Mir Sayyed 'Ali was in the service of "His Imperial Majesty", apparently the emperor Akbar, and "begged leave" to go and live in Mecca where he died.¹⁰ No date is given. This underlines the artist's deep faith, echoed in his pen-name Joda'i. It does not mean "The Recluse", as S.C. Welch and other Western scholars have written, but conveys the Sufi concept of man's "separation" from God (*firaq*, an Arabic loanword for which *joda'i* is the Persian semantic equivalent) ended by death and oneness with God (*tauhid*) in afterlife.

Supplementing the written sources, one miniature with the signature of Mir Mosavver is of the utmost importance in telling us that the idea of painting verses into the image, followed by the artist's signature, was acquired by Mir Sayyed 'Ali from his father. It is painted in the famous "Quintet" (*Khamse*) executed for Shah Tahmasp (figure 2).

The page is part of "The Treasure of Esotericism" (*Makhzan ol-Asrar*) and relates to the episode of Khosrow Anushirvan and his Vizier gazing together at a "village in ruins" (*deh-e viran*).¹¹ The King has asked the Vizier to tell him what two birds are murmuring to each other (this identifies the Vizier as an esoteric master: in Islam, the language of the birds symbolizes the esoteric discourse). The Vizier explains that a male bird gave away a young bird as a bride to the other and is asking for financial compensation, suggesting the village in ruins and "a few more".

Instead of a village, Mir Mosavver has represented a crumbling palace, thus inserting bold notions into Nezami's poem (that the living King's palace, which will inevitably fall into ruins one day, is no better than a crumbling village). On the gesso revetment peeling off under the arch, he wrote this distich (*Mojtass* metre):

*'Emarat-e del-e viran-e dard*mandan kon*

'Emarati beh az-in nist' dar jahan-e kharab

Erect the building of [=Restore] the hearts in ruins of those in spiritual pain
There is no better building than that in this world of destruction¹²

"Those in spiritual pain" are the Sufi mystics in search of God.

Below, the painter signed in Arabic:

Harrarabu Mir Musawwir

Sanata 946

Written by Mir Mosavver

In the year 946 [May 19, 1539-May 7, 1540]

The signature takes the form used in calligraphy, which almost certainly designates Mir Mosavver as a practising calligrapher.

2. Anushirvan and his Vizier gaze at a "village in ruins". Signed and dated on the wall by Mir Mosavver in 946 (May 19, 1539-May 7, 1540). From Nezami's *Khamse* copied "in the capital Tabriz". British Library, London, Or. 2265, fol. 15b.



The couplet introduces an additional nuance, picking up Nezami's own theme in the distich written in the top corner right:

Kin deh-e viran be gozari be ma
Niz' chenin chand' separi be ma
 Saying, let me have this village in ruins
 And hand me over a few more like it¹³

The signature couplet rings like some rebuke delivered offstage. Conceived in the finest tradition of Sufi irony, it heralds the tone of Mir Sayyed 'Ali's own versified commentaries in his images.

His father's painting thus indirectly echoes what is said about Mir Sayyed 'Ali in the written sources. And so do his own, to a far greater degree.

Mir Sayyed 'Ali's portraits

Only three miniatures are identified as the artist's work by inscriptions from Mir Sayyed 'Ali's own hand, and of these two are portraits.

The earliest is a drawing mounted on board and framed by cartouches of calligraphy of the highest order (figure 3).¹⁴ It was once the third folio in a "patchwork album" (*moraqqā*), as collections of separate leaves with figural images or calligraphy mounted on board and articulated in concertina form are called in Persian. A young man seated on his heels holds up a slim volume of horizontal format — possibly a *moraqqā*. A single line of Persian inscriptions in the *Nasta'liq* script, split in two halves, runs on the two pages (figure 5): *Gholam-e hazrat-e Shab/Sayyed 'Ali ebn-e Sayyed Mohammad*. "The page/disciple of His Majesty the Shah/Sayyed 'Ali son of Sayyed Mohammad."

This is a way of saying that Sayyed 'Ali is the artistic disciple of Shah Tahmasp, which is less of a hyperbolic flattery than might be thought — Shah Tahmasp really was both a great calligrapher and a painter of a high order.¹⁵ The man represented clearly is Sayyed 'Ali and this is his work.

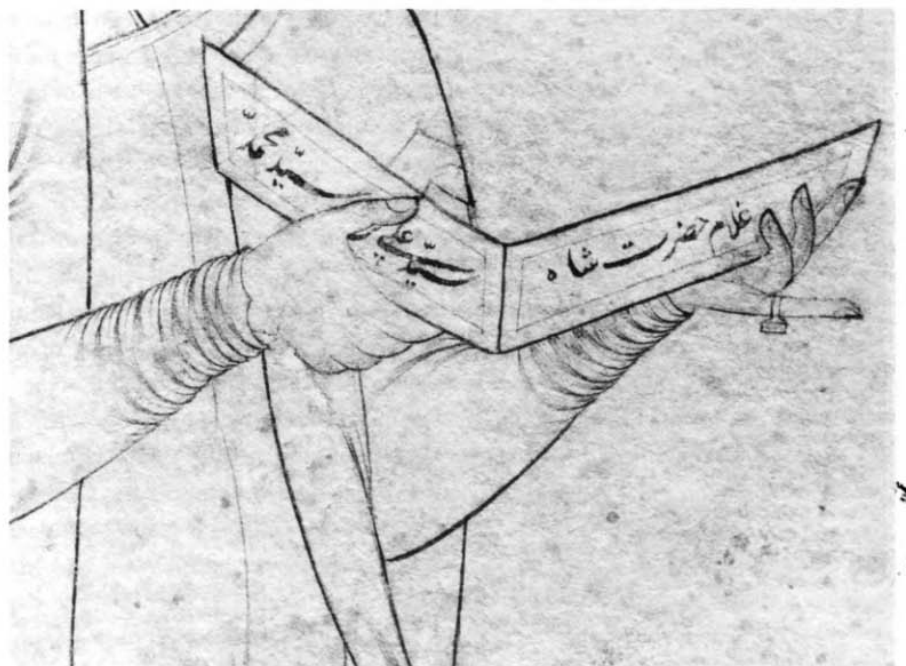
Could the self-portrait have been intended as a frontispiece for a *moraqqā* destined for Shah Tahmasp? The question would be purely hypothetical were it not for the existence of a short Persian treatise written in 964 (November 4, 1556–October 23, 1557) by Qotb od-Din Mohammad Qessekh^{an}.¹⁶ The Persian author states that he wrote it as a



3. Self-portrait in black ink painted in Iran by Mir Sayyed 'Ali, signed on the album held by the sitter. Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Washington, DC, S86.0291.



4. Detail of the self-portrait painted in Iran. Note the eyes allowing the white to show above the pupil.



5. Detail of the portrait painted in Iran showing the signature on the outside of an album. The left-hand part reads "Sayyed 'Ali Jelbn-e Sayyed Mohammad".

preface to a *moraqqā* made up from loose sheets of calligraphy and painting in his possession.¹⁷ Each time the talk at court was on that topic, he would look for a specimen by the master under discussion. The difficulty of finding them induced him to have them arranged in *moraqqā* form.

Recounting a story, Qotb od-Din mentions several artists' names: "The masters of 'Eraq (i.e. the north-western quarter of present-day Iran) and Fars, like Master (*Ostad*) Darvish, Deputy (*Khalife*, successor to a spiritual or artistic master) Mohammad Hayat, Mir Mosavver, his son Sayyed 'Ali, the Master's son Soltan Mahmud, his son Mirza 'Ali..."¹⁸ and adds at the end of the preface: "The purpose of this story-telling was to mention some of the masters whose artistic monuments are included in this *moraqqā*."¹⁹ In short, the *moraqqā* for which he wrote the preface included works by Mir Sayyed 'Ali (and his father Mir Mosavver). The titles of the king given by Qessekh²⁰ according to the formal protocol in Arabic indicate that his *moraqqā* was to be presented to Shah Tahmasp.²⁰ The drawing of the young man might have been a frontispiece for that *moraqqā* requested from Mir Sayyed 'Ali.

An offering to the king is indeed suggested in the posture of the young scribe and by the unusual formulation of the signature, with its reference to "His Majesty the Shah", as in some public address. If the Persian ode calligraphed around the drawing which has remained unpublished should turn out to have been part of the 10/16th century mounting, it would bear out the assumption. It reads like a panegyric on the Shah, celebrating his appearance, and begins (*Mojtass metre*):

*Cho sarf gadd-e to dar juy'bar-e dide resad-Mara khadang-e bala bar del-e ramide
resad/ Ze didan-e to bala'i ke miresad del-e man-Omidvar' chananam ke pish-e
dide resad*

As your cypress figure comes to the brook of my eye
The arrow of calamity comes to my famed heart
As, from seeing you, calamity comes to it, my heart
I hope, will come before your eyes²¹

Unsigned, the calligraphy seems to be from the hand of Shah Mahmud Neyshaburi who calligraphed the "Quintet" executed for Shah Tahmasp.²²

The self-portrait in pen and ink datable to the early 1540s is so far one of only two authentically signed works dating from the artist's Iranian period. The calligraphic flow and firmness of the strokes reveal a great master. The handling of the face (figure 4) with its light arched eyebrows and the white of the eyes slightly visible over the tiny black pupils, as in some kind of ecstatic wonder, was to become a permanent feature in Mir Sayyed 'Ali's figural art.

It recurs in the next signed work, a single-leaf miniature now in the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (figure 1), which ranks among the great masterpieces of Iranian art in Hindustan.²³ Here, too, a youthful reader bends forward to look at a manuscript set on a wooden folding lectern or *rable*. While the miniature is richer in detail, and enhanced by the colouring, the similarities with the drawing are readily apparent. The faces are rendered with the same small pursed lips, the same eyes staring in startled wonder, allowing the white of the eye to show above the small black pupils. The folds of the long robe over the heels display the same calligraphic curves fanning out downwards and allowing inverted trapezoidal forms to be seen.

As in the Iranian period portrait, the signature is painted into the image. It appears on a pupil's wooden writing tablet or *lowh* lying across the corner of the carpet on which the young man is seated. At the top of the writing tablet, a Persian distich refers to the object. Here, again, the verse has been so far misunderstood. In the English translation by Stuart Cary Welch and Martin Dickson, *sar* and *lowh* have been read as one word,

6. Detail of figure 13, a miniature from the *Khamse* copied in Tabriz. Khosrow Parviz attends a celebration (*bazm*) where Barbad plays famous melodies. British Library, London, Or. 2265, fol. 77b.



sarlouh, understood by them to mean “frontispiece”.²⁴ To respect the metre (*khafif*) and, not least, to make sense, they must be read as two words, *sar-e louh*, “the top of the tablet”:

Bar sar-e louh-e u neveshte be-zar:

“*Jowr-e ostad^c beh ke mehr-e pedar*”

At the top of the writing tablet, it is written in gold:

“The master’s tyranny is better than the father’s kindness”²⁵

At the bottom of the writing tablet, the artist’s signature is given in the form of a calligraphic line. Introduced by an Arabic set formula *sawwarahu*, “depicted it”, the signature goes on in Persian: *Sawwarahu Sayyed ‘Ali Nader ol-Molk-e Homayunshahi*, “Depicted by Sayyed ‘Ali the Homayunshahid ‘Rarity of the Kingdom’”.

The signature tallies with the information given by Amin Ahmad. “Mir Sayyed Ali-e Mansur” came to be addressed as Nader ol-Molk-e Homayunshahi while in the service of Homayun.²⁶ In the couplet, written as an autobiographical allusion, the painter thanks his father, who was his master, for his tyranny even more than for his kindness. The muffled irony of the barbed compliment is in tune with that displayed by Mir Mosavver in his miniature relating to *The Treasure of Secrets* in the “Quintet” of 1539-43.

Interestingly, the self-portrait includes a very typical device already found in that “Quintet”. This is a rug of which precisely one quarter is shown, with two calligraphic panels in the long border and one in the shorter border (also seen in figure 6).²⁷ The *Nasta‘liq* calligraphy which stands out in red on white is the same too, and so is the text

chosen by Mir Sayyed 'Ali for the carpet on which the young man kneels. Unread by those who have commented on the portrait, it reproduces a distich from a mystical poem (*Hazaj* metre):

Do cheshmam farsh-e an manzel ke sazi jelvegah anja

Be har ja pa nabi kb^h abam ke gardam khak-e rah anja

My two eyes are the coverings in that abode so that you may ordain your
bridal room, there

Wherever you trudge along, I want to become the dust on the road, there

7. Detail of a miniature in grisaille. Moghul school; early eleventh/seventeenth century. An astrologer holds a rotating ring to determine a horoscope, while a man has just opened a manuscript, presumably the Koran. Laid across another manuscript on the ground, a scroll is partly unrolled with scissors ready for clipping it. Musée Guimet, Paris.

The connection of the portrait with the Tabriz royal atelier is thus thoroughly demonstrated. At the same time, various details leave little doubt that it was executed in Hindustan. Firstly, the costume displays Hindustani features, the transparent muslin scarf with its extremities thrown over the shoulders, the short dagger with broad triangular grip topping the narrow, almost tubular hilt and equally broad blade at the top. Secondly, among the flowers rising from the lower frame, the lotus blossoms with blue buds and pink petals outlined in carmine red are unknown in Iranian book painting. Thirdly, the scroll of white paper lying across the rug and the grass, shown unfolding in an attempt at a *trompe l'oeil* effect of volume and perspective, has no parallel in Iran. But it does in Hindustan. The same type of scroll breaking into horizontal faceting, as if it had been folded, is held by the bespectacled character in Mir Mosavver's self-portrait which, as will be seen, was undoubtedly done in Hindustan. It can also be seen in a drawing illustrating the reading of a horoscope, in the Musée Guimet (figure 7).²⁸ There are no grounds for assuming that this European-inspired rendition of a scroll ever reached Kabul or that such a thoroughly Hindustani attire was worn there. Therefore, all the indications are that the miniature was probably painted after Homayun's return to Delhi in Ramadan 962 (July 28-August 18, 1555).²⁹ As the painter calls himself "the Homayunshahid" he completed it before Homayun's death on 15 Rabi' I, 963/January 28, 1556.³⁰





In short, the admirable self-portrait of Mir Sayyed 'Ali appears to be the very earliest closely datable work of the Moghul school of Indo-Iranian painting and certainly the only one explicitly linked to Homyayun.

A third portrait, now in the Musée Guimet, shows an old man seated on his heels bending forward as he holds open a scroll of the type that has just been described (figure 8).³¹ The posture, the scale of the figure in the sheet as it appears (it could have been cropped), the typical handling of the folds over the heels, combine to suggest the hand of an artist closely connected with the author of the previous two portraits.

The costume is also Hindustani. It includes the small turban lightly poised on the head. The long cloak double-breasted to the right of the chest (the left-hand side in the image) is of identical cut to that worn by the young man, and the motif painted on it is the same. The handling of the highly individualized features could indicate some exposure to European art. Therefore, the likelihood is that the portrait was executed in Hindustan, around the same time as Mir Sayyed 'Ali's second self-portrait.³² But by whom?

The clue is provided in the fourteen lines of *Nasta'liq* text visible on the scroll. Stchoukine and Minorsky misread some key words when they published the original. In the top corner right, God is invoked by celebrating Him: *Allah ta'ala*, "God the exalted".

8. Self-portrait by Mir Mosavver, Mir Sayyed 'Ali's father, holding a petition (*arzedašt*) to Homyayun. Musée du Louvre, on long loan to the Musée Guimet, Paris, MA 3577.

This is followed by the single exclamation in Sufi style, *Huuwa*, "Him!". The text then reads:

*Arzedasht / Pir-e gholam-e dirine Mir Mosavver / be'ezz arz mi-resanad ke /
moddat-e madid shod ke / bandezade dar gholami / be sar mi-barad va
omidvar / be anast ke 'nayat [be bakhsband?] va darigh na-farmayand /
faqir / omid ... / ham anqarib ... / az seyr qadam sakhte be-molazemat
ayad En sha'a / [Allah] ke Saye-ye Aftab / bad /
Petition / the old and long time bonded officer [gholam] / submits to the mighty
one that / it is now a very long period that / He who was born in royal bondage
/ has been spending in [royal] office and hopes / that [His Majesty will confer
his?] favour and will not deny regretfully / ... the poor / hopes ...
also in the near future ... having lifted his steps from his course [=ended his
journey] will enter service in the royal entourage [be-molazemat ayad, a formula
applied to the highest officials] If so please / [God] may the shadow of the sun / ...
... be! /*

Filling in the lacunae corresponding to sections concealed by the old man's arm is not as obvious as has been suggested. Without attempting here a word-by-word gloss, it may be said that the text refers to Mir Mosavver, identified as the sitter. Expressing himself in direct speech, the latter says he was born in royal service (*bandezade*) and has long been in royal office. He hopes that when his journey (*seyr*) is concluded, he will enter royal service. The only interpretation that brings together all the loose ends is that (1) Mir Mosavver is on his way to join Mir Sayyed 'Ali who, as we know from the *Golestan-e Honar*, preceded him in joining Homayun;³³ (2) he is due to enter Homayun's service; and (3) that he, Mir Mosavver, submits the request in the form of a portrait of himself presenting a petition.

One may observe that as in Mir Sayyed 'Ali's two portraits, the man named in the miniature has to be the author, in this case, Mir Mosavver, his father and master. Hence, the similarities of the miniature to Mir Sayyed 'Ali's style. One could suppose that Mir Mosavver imitated his son's portraiture style, but the Eastern tradition makes this unlikely. Altogether, everything including an attribution on the margin, points to Mir Mosavver as the highly probable author.

A painter of figural scenes

Two portraits fully signed by Mir Sayyed 'Ali and a third one with a long inscription obliquely identifying his father as the author point to a shared interest in portraiture — already noted in his father Mir Mosavver by Qazi Ahmad.³⁴ This interest is reflected in his compositions with multiple characters where some individual figures stand out.

The most important miniature by far is a folio torn off from a manuscript now pasted on board, which the Arthur M. Sackler Gallery in Washington, DC acquired as part of the Henry Vever Collection (figure 9).³⁵ Possibly removed from a manuscript of Nezami's Quintet (*Khamse*), it is in any case contemporary with the famous *Khamse* now in the British Library copied for Shah Tahmasp in the years 1539-43 "at Tabriz", in Azarbayjan, then the capital of Iran. The master's signature in tiny characters has remained undetected until now. Copied on the white leaf held up by a schoolboy seated on his heels (figure 10), it makes the Sackler page a cornerstone for the study of Mir Sayyed 'Ali's work. The name appears at the end of a calligraphic piece (*qet'e*) consisting, it would seem, of one Persian hemistich of which the central part has almost faded away, followed by the standard signing formula in Arabic, "Sayyed 'Ali executed its figures", *sauwarahu Sayyed 'Ali*. While the word *sayyed* survives merely as a ghostly outline perceptible only when looked at under powerful magnification, the name 'Ali is perfectly

9. Folio from a manuscript mounted on board signed by Mir Sayyed 'Ali painted in Tabriz, circa 1539-43. Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Washington, DC, S86.0221.





10. Detail of figure 9: the schoolboy kneeling in a position that anticipates the self-portrait in figure 1, holds up a sheet on which Mir Sayyed 'Ali's signature in Arabic appears under a Persian distich.



11. Detail of figure 9: the king in his palace holds a horizontal album in which a Persian distich describes the ruler observing the scene below.



12. Detail of figure 9:
the schoolmaster raising his
cane sits on a rug inscribed
with verses by Hafez.

clear, written in the artist's distinctive hand as comparison with the Sackler self-portrait will show.

Several characteristic conceits of Mir Sayyed 'Ali are represented. A seated character, apparently the king, judging from the head-dress, holds up a horizontal album open to reveal two lines of calligraphy as Mir Sayyed 'Ali himself does in his self-portrait. They reproduce a Persian distich (*Hazaj* metre) which has remained unpublished (figure 11): *Boti didam ke dar qellat sabu ostad' midadash — Nazar bar suratash mikard-o ma'ni mishod az yadash*, "I saw a beauty to whom the master gave a pitcher [of wine] at a time of penury — He looked at her/his face and forgot what he had meant to do."

Further below, a second idiosyncratic device appears, that is also paralleled in the Los Angeles self-portrait. The teacher raising his cane to spank a pupil is seated on a rug similarly rendered — precisely one quarter of it is shown, with two calligraphic panels on the long side and one on the shorter side (figure 12). The script is the same and so is the colour scheme, a rusty red and almond green on white. A third characteristic shared by the miniature scene and the self-portrait is the handling of flowers, done with remarkable precision. The outlines here too are emphasized in a different colour and the idiosyncratic liliun with ochre petals delineated in carmine red is also present in the far corner left. A fourth link lies in the general composition of the garden scene in the top quarter left of the miniature. Divided in two halves halfway up, painted in similar colours, it anticipates the natural setting in the self-portrait excepting the plane tree.

But perhaps the most telling analogy lies in the irony conveyed in the miniature in the guise of a poetic quotation on the rug. Far from being too small to be legible as has been claimed, it reproduces a famous distich from an ode by Hafez, followed by the first hemistich of the last distich:

Takiye bar jay-e bozorgan na tavan zad be gazaf

Magar asbab-e bozorgi hame amade koni

Kar-e khod gar be khoda baz gozari Hafez

[Ey basa eysb' ke ba bakht khodadade koni]

You cannot rest excessively in the place of the great ones

Unless you have prepared all the paraphernalia of greatness

If you leave your lot in the Lord's care Hafez

[You shall often lead the good life with the good fortune given by the Lord]⁶⁰

The poetic quotation, which serves as an ironic caption, gives the clue to the scene — the pupil who presumed to take the master's seat in his absence is being caned for his insolence. Together, the Washington page done around 1540 and the Los Angeles self-portrait painted in 1555 illustrate the transfer process of pictorial concepts from the Iranian court atelier at Tabriz to the newly established court atelier at Lahore. Seen from that angle, the new addition to Mir Sayyed 'Ali's signed work is of paramount importance.

Thus expanded, the body of signed work provides a far sounder basis for attributions. At least three miniatures can be firmly ascribed to the artist.

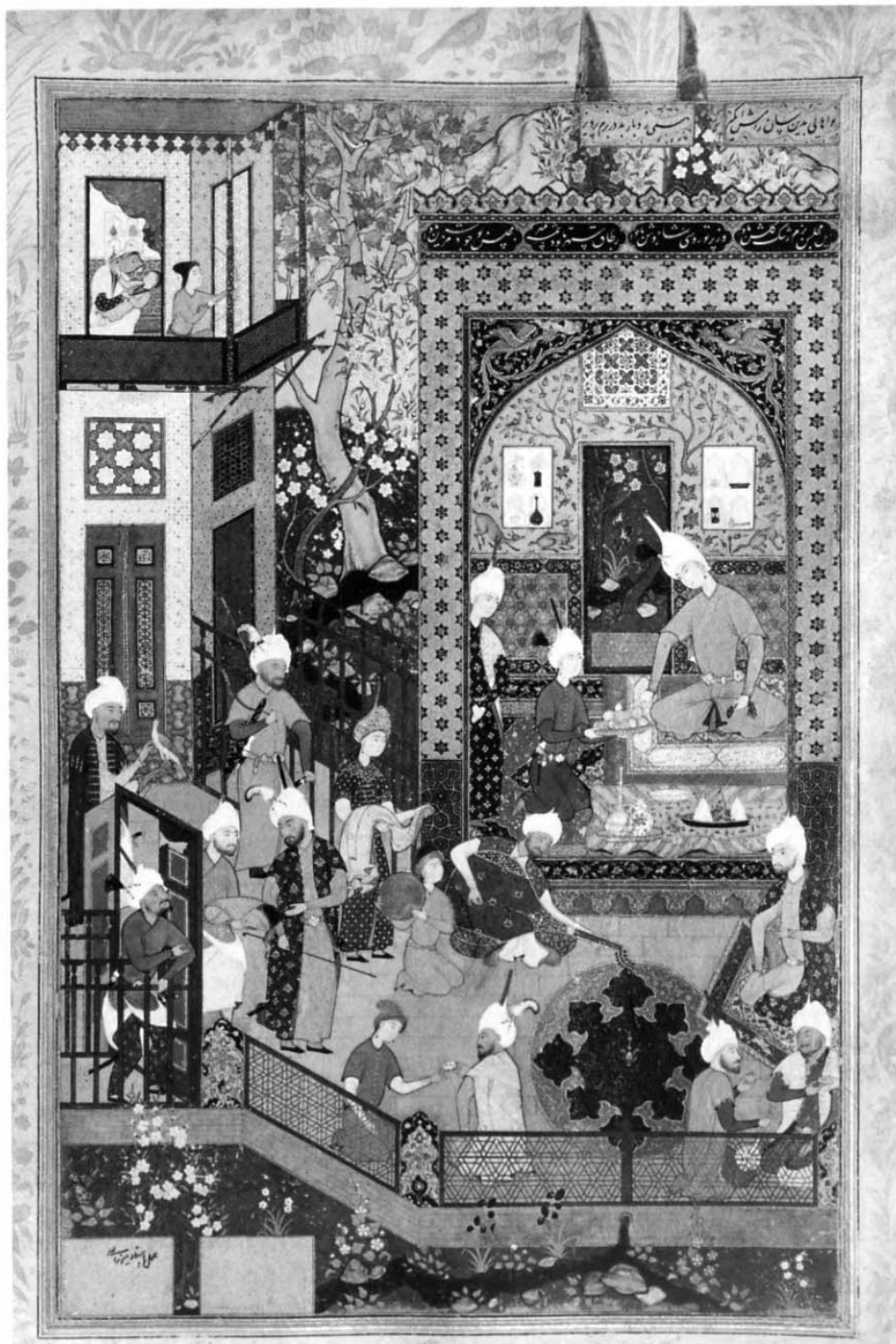
The first one is a scene in the manuscript of Nezami's Quintet (figure 13).⁶¹ The panels of text define the moment to which they relate in the romance of Khosrow and Shirin.⁶² The first two begin (*Hazaj* metre):

Thus such melodious tunes

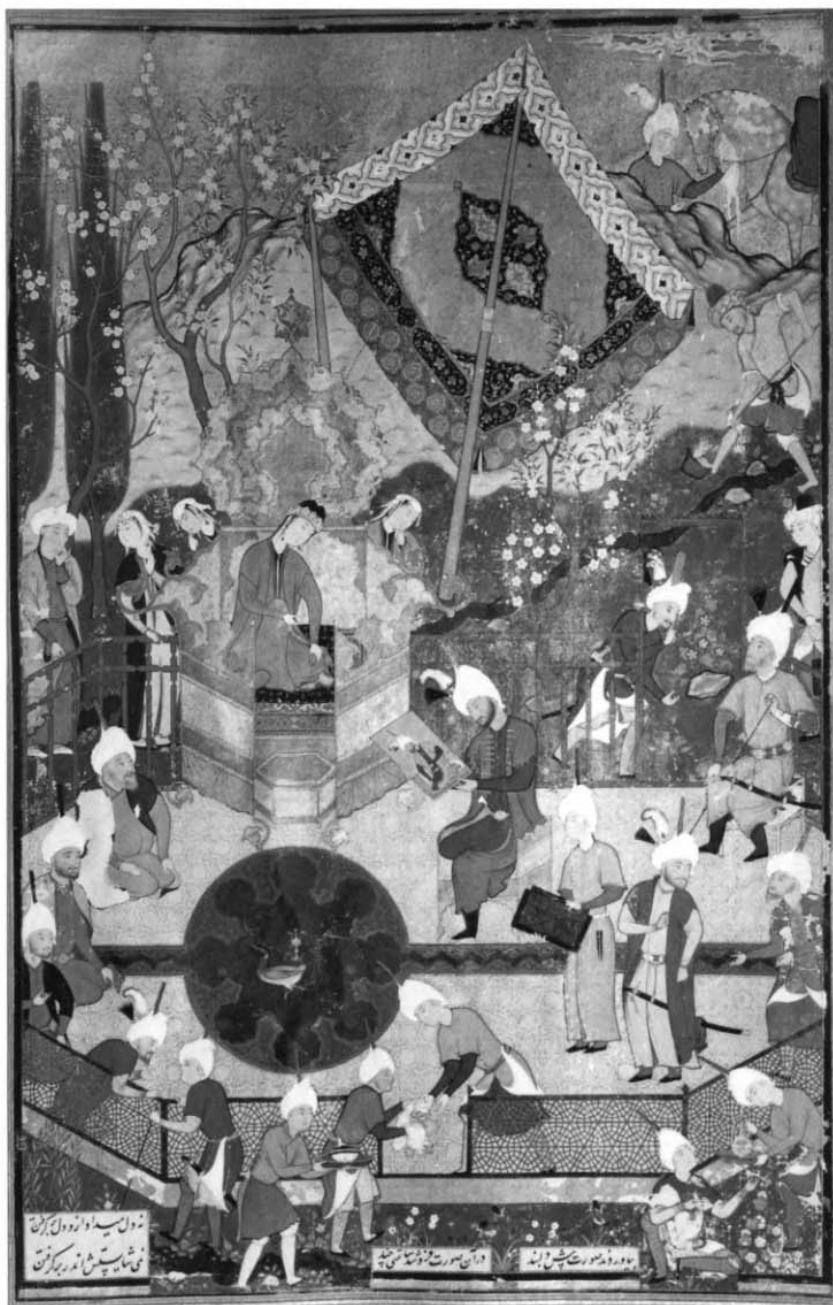
Did Barbad play at the banquet of Parviz

"The Celebration [*bazm*] of Parviz" is indeed the theme dealt with in the miniature, complete with wine libations and music playing.

13. Miniature from the Quintet copied for Shah Tahmasp in 1539-43. The musician Barbad performs in a celebration in the presence of the Sasanian King Parviz. British Library, London, Or. 2265, fol. 77b.



14. Miniature from the Quintet copied for Shah Tahmasp in 1539-43. Shapur has drawn the portrait of Khosrow which is then brought to Shirin, seen here enthroned. British Library, London, Or. 2265, fol. 48b.



The Shah himself is seated on a rug represented in the same way as in the Washington and Los Angeles self-portraits. The cartouches, identical in design and colour scheme, enclose the same text as in the self-portrait in figure 1. Mir Sayyed 'Ali's idiosyncratic face shown three-quarters bending forward, with the white of the eyes visible above the small pupils, occurs several times: the Shah seated on the rug and the cupbearer holding out a wine cup behind the low railing, centre left, display these features. The attribution, probably from a librarian's hand, to "the master Ali Mirza", scribbled in a panel may therefore be disregarded. Close analogies in composition and detail with the signed miniature in Washington (which include the vaulted hall with its nearly identical Simorgh birds in the spandrels and the handling of the plane tree in the corner left) leave no doubt that Mir Sayyed 'Ali painted this image.

A reasonable degree of likelihood exists regarding a second miniature in the Quintet despite an inscription in the margin, superbly calligraphed, that again gives it to Mirza Ali (figure 14).³⁹ The "signature face" of Mir Sayyed 'Ali can be recognized in the servant with a bowl and cover on a tray, the servant in the bottom corner right, and others. The

device of a character seated on a rug of which one quarter is shown discreetly appears in the portrait at which the enthroned king is gazing. The whole scene, properly identified by Binyon, has been unconvincingly described as “Nushabeh recognizing Iskandar from his portrait” by Welch and Dickson, who apparently ignored Nezami’s verses in the calligraphic panels.⁴⁰ Shapur has drawn the portrait of Khosrow which is then brought to Shirin, as the line at the bottom says. She is seen here on a magnificent throne, the image juxtaposing two successive moments — Shapur gazing at his work and Shirin waiting for it to be brought (“They brought this figure [=portrait] to this seducer — In this figure she became absorbed for a while, etc.”). Interestingly, this way of combining two moments fits the handling of a polo game as described by Homayun in his letter to Rashid Khan.⁴¹

A third painting is without doubt the work of Mir Sayyed ‘Ali. The encampment scene, probably relating to an episode of Leyla and Majnun, is now in the Fogg Art Museum in Cambridge, Massachusetts.⁴² A later pseudo-signature in the margin may be ignored. The miniature displays three separate features that are found both in the signed page and in the Los Angeles self-portrait — the signature face of Mir Sayyed ‘Ali, the carpet of which one quarter is shown, and, finally, the plants in a row carefully singled out and outlined in a different colour. On the carpet, Persian verses which no one has so far endeavoured to read are the same distich and hemistich by Hafez as on the signed miniature in Washington (referred to above, figure 9), providing conclusive evidence that they are the work of Mir Sayyed ‘Ali.

A fourth miniature in the Royal Scottish Museum in Edinburgh stands a reasonable chance of being the work of Mir Sayyed ‘Ali. It relates to the battle opposing the armies of Khosrow Parviz and the rebel Bahram Chubine.⁴³ The signature face appears at least twice. Khosrow Parviz has it, as does the rider below him. It may not be enough to guarantee the attribution but this writer has so far failed to find Sayyed ‘Ali’s signature face in the work of any other artist.

In addition to the four miniatures, one drawing in black and red ink in the Arthur M. Sackler Gallery can be credited to Mir Sayyed ‘Ali (figure 15). The “Hunt” as Lowry and Nemazee call it, shows a king hunting wild asses (*gur*) in the company of a young prince who stands by on his horse, holding his bow ready to shoot.⁴⁴ The young prince (figure 16) has the features of Mir Sayyed ‘Ali’s signature face. He wears a turban of precisely the same proportion and design as the model depicted in Mir Sayyed ‘Ali’s Iranian self-portrait. The calligraphic handling displays the same flow and vigour in both drawings. Comparison of the two details in figure 4 and figure 16 reveals the close similarity despite the difference in scale. In short, the same artist Mir Sayyed ‘Ali, almost certainly did both, around the same time. Indeed, the two drawings may never have been separated: both are laid on board, framed by panels of calligraphy from the same hand, possibly that of Shah Mahmud Neyshaburi, and the mounts are in exactly the same shades of maroon and dull gold.

That only a small number of paintings or drawings — seven, assuming the attributions to be correct, or perhaps eight — should be recorded so far, is disappointing concerning such a great artist.⁴⁵ There is no discernible trace of his role in the remains of the great *Hamze-Name* project, in which he had a leading role. This comes as no great surprise. Probably less than one-twentieth of the paintings reported to have been executed in the book are now known. While Mir Sayyed ‘Ali may reasonably be surmised to have been personally involved in drawing and painting some, the chances of his personal contributions surviving among these are slight.

In addition, Mir Sayyed ‘Ali had admirers striving to work in his manner, possibly among the artists working in the studio set up in Lahore (*tasvirkhane*). This is shown by the drawing of a man gazing at an open book which is clearly not by Mir Sayyed ‘Ali (figure 17) but is probably contemporary with his work.⁴⁶ The strokes are heavier, the lectern is clumsy, the handling of the head is in a different mood. In the lower corner

15. Drawing of a royal hunt in black and red ink from a *moraqqa'*. The King hunts onagers in the presence of a young prince. Tabriz, early 1540s. Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Washington, DC. S86.0290.



16. Detail of the prince in figure 15. Compare the turban with the head-dress in figure 4 and note the white over the black pupils.

17. Drawing of a man of letters gazing at a manuscript enhanced with mauve colour. In the manner of and with an attribution to Mir Sayyed 'Ali. Musée Guimet, Paris, EO 3577b.



left, a librarian's attribution in a clumsy hand is introduced by the Persian word *kar*, "work of", not used in signatures. The folding lectern tells us that the device was seen as a typical conceit of the artist.

With only two works, both of them portraits, that can be placed in Lahore, assessing the artist's overall contribution to the birth of the Iranian school of Hindustan, which soon turned into a Hindustani school drawing on its own revolutionary aesthetics and renewed iconography, therefore remains a matter of conjecture based on the evidence of sources backed by a few images. Mir Sayyed 'Ali certainly stands out as one of the greatest painters of single figures that the Iranian world ever had, of which the masterpiece now in Los Angeles is the ultimate example. A skilled calligrapher, judging from the dazzling, fluid strokes of his pen and from the specimens of *Nasta'liq* script painted into his images, Mir Sayyed 'Ali followed the Iranian tradition whereby the written word and the visual image are not just inseparably linked but introduce nuances modulating their respective meanings. A poet who wrote some remarkable verses, he crafted his lines, as he did his visual compositions, with great skill in balance and precision in the interplay of images. He repeated some favoured lines by great poets that sign his images without naming him.

Most remarkably, he can be seen from his signed work to have drawn the last great archetypal faces of the Persian-speaking world, timeless and impersonal, and the first highly individualized portraits for which the idea was borrowed from the West through channels that have yet to be ascertained. In this sense he was in his own time a great man of the past and a bold pioneer of the future.

Notes

1. Abo'l Fazl 'Allami, *A'in-e Akbari* (Lucknow 1869), (3 volumes), vol. I, p. 290. Ed. H.B. Blochmann (Calcutta 1872-77), (2 volumes), vol. II, p. 254 (under his pen-name [*takballos*], Joda'i).

2. Qazi Mir Ahmad-e Monshi-e Qomi, *Golestan-e Honar*, ed. Ahmad Soheyli Kh"ansari (Tehran 1352/1973), p. 139. He records Mir Mosavver's name as "Mansur", hence, perhaps, Abo'l Fazl's reference to him as "*Mir* [courtesy title] Mansur".
3. Bayazid Bayat, *Tazkere*, ed. Muhammad Hidayat Husayn (Calcutta 1941) ("*Tadbkira-i-Humayun wa Akbar of Bayazid Biyat*"), p. 65.
4. *Ibid.*, pp. 67-68.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 68. Cited in a translation that distorts the meaning in Michael Brand and Glenn D. Lowry, *Akbar's India* (New York 1985), p. 24. The authors refer (p. 129, note 48) to Pramod Chandra, *The Tuti-Nama of the Cleveland Museum of Art* (Graz 1976), pp. 172-73.
6. Abo'l Fazl 'Allami, *Akbar-Name* ("*Akbarnāmah*") (Calcutta 1873-81), (2 volumes), vol. II, p. 42.
7. 'Abd ol-Qader b. Molukshah Bada'uni, *Montakhab ot-Tavarikh*, ed. Mowlavi Ahmad 'Ali (Calcutta 1865-69), (3 volumes), vol. III, p. 211. John Seyller, "A Dated Hamzanama Illustration", *Artibus Asiae* (Zurich-Washington 1993), vol. LIII, 3-4, pp. 503-05 follows Heinrich Gluck (1925) who believed only fourteen volumes were produced. Dr Seyller's interpretation of a number inscribed on a tent, "972", as a date is hardly plausible. As he himself notes, the word *sana*, "year", is missing. At that period and in an elaborate manuscript, the date would have been lodged in a monumental inscription, painted into the image, not added to it in random fashion. Whatever its actual meaning, the number is apocryphal and complex problems relating to the chronology stand as they did previously.
8. Nezam od-Din Ahmad, *Tabaqat-e Akbari*, ed. B.De (Calcutta 1931), (2 volumes), vol. II, p. 504, enters him under "Amir Sayyed Ali *mosavver*" adding immediately, "whose penname is Joda'i", and mentioning in passing that he "was an incomparable figural painter". *A'in-e Akbari*, ed. Blochmann, vol. II, p. 254. 'Abd ol-Qader b. Molukshah Bada'uni, *Montakhab ot-Tavarikh*, vol. III, p. 211.
9. See previous note: *divani tamam karde*. Bada'uni specifies "and these verses are from that [*divani*]". They include the verses quoted in this essay.
10. Amin Ahmad Razi, *Haft Eqlim*, ed. Javad Fazel (Tehran n.d.), (3 volumes), vol II, p. 93.
11. Colour reproductions: Laurence Binyon, *The Poems of Nizami* (London 1928), pl. III, where the later attribution to Mirak is accepted as fact; Stuart Cary Welch, *Royal Persian Manuscripts* (London 1976), p. 70, where it is called "attributable to Aqa Mirak"; Martin Bernard Dickson and Stuart Cary Welch, *The Houghton Shahnameh* (Cambridge, Mass. 1981) (2 volumes), vol. I, p. 109.
12. Martin Bernard Dickson is credited by Welch with the translation from the Persian (see *Royal Persian Manuscripts*, p. 5). He rendered the inscription as: "Erected in the desert heart of those deprived of happiness, there is no better edifice than this." This is not what it means.
13. Nezami, *Makhzan ol-Asrar*, ed. Hasan Vahid Dastgerdi (Tehran 1343/1964'), pp. 80-81. The precise passage has not been hitherto identified by Western art historians.
14. Dickson and Welch, *The Houghton Shahnameh*, vol. I, p. 189, fig. 246; Glenn D. Lowry and Milo Cleveland Beach with Roya Marefat and Wheeler M. Thackston, *An Annotated and Illustrated Checklist of the Vever Collection* (Washington, DC 1988), pp. 300-01. Reproduced on p. 300, fig. 351, where *gholam* is rendered as "slave". *Gholam*, rendered here as "page" (it refers in early times to bonded officers who could be very high in the hierarchy), is used in Persian of the master's trainee and disciple in crafts; Glenn D. Lowry with Susan Nemazee, *A Jeweler's Eye. Islamic Arts of the Book from the Vever Collection* (Washington, DC 1988). Illustrated in colour on p. 192. Described on p. 193 as only "attributable to Mir Sayyid-Ali" and "inscribed to Sayyid-Ali b. Sayyid Muhammad"; Amina Okada, *Imperial Mughal Painters* (tr. Deke Dusingberre) (Paris 1992), p. 71, reproduced fig. 67. Okada also refers to "the inscription on the tablet" and is not sure whether it is the name of the artist or the model, or both. It is undoubtedly a signature and its emplacement also identifies the artist as the sitter.
15. On Shah Tahmasp's calligraphy and painting, see latterly Chahryar Adle, "Autopsia, in absentia. Sur la date de l'introduction et de la constitution de l'album de Bahrām Mirzā par Dust-Mohammad en 951/1544", *Studia Iranica*, vol. 19, 1990, 2, pp. 219-56. See the superb miniature, a standing princely figure, by Shah Tahmasp on pl. XII and the remarks in p. 228.
16. Hoseyn Khedivjam, "*Resale'i dar tarikhe kbatt va naqqashi az: Qotb od-Din Mohammad-e Qessekh'an*" ("A treatise on the history of calligraphy and painting by Qotb od-Din Mohammad Qessekh'an") in *Sokhan*, vol. 17, pp. 6-7, Mehr 1346/1967, pp. 666-76. Qessekh'an's text begins p. 667.
17. *Ibid.*, pp. 667 and 675.
18. *Ibid.*, p. 674.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 676: *maqsud az in qessekh'an zekr-e ba'azi az ostadan bud ke yadegar-e ishan dar-in moraqqa ast.*
20. *Ibid.*, p. 675.
21. The poem begins (as established by the inner rhyme of the opening distich) in the top corner right, when the drawing is looked at upside down. It then continues at a right-angle downwards, goes on in the line that is above the seated character, and thence in the other vertical column.
22. In addition to the manuscript colophons, the fact is recorded by Qazi Ahmad, *Golestan-e Honar*, p. 87.
23. *Indian Miniature Painting from the Collection of Edwin Binney, 3rd* (Portland, Oregon 1973), p. 30 (colour illustration). Welch, *Wonders of the Age*, p. 192, pl. 74, p. 193 where the text is incorrectly read, understood, and translated. Dickson and Welch, *The Houghton Shahnameh*, vol. I, pp. 190-91, reproduced p. 190. Brand and Lowry, *Akbar's India*, p. 25, pl. 6, entry 137 where Welch/Dickson's incorrect translation is carried over. Amina Okada, *Indian Miniatures of the Mughal Court*, pp. 70-71, where the time span is given as 1549-56 and as "circa 1550" in the caption to colour reproduction 73. The caption states, slightly inaccurately, "signed Mir Sayyid Ali". "Mir", a courtesy title given to but never used by the artist, does not appear in his signing formulae. In his review of previous remarks on the miniature, Pratapaditya Pal, *Indian Painting. A Catalogue of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art Collection* (Los Angeles 1993), pp. 191-93, cites

- the reading of the signing formula by Wheeler M. Thackston but draws no conclusion concerning the name form. He takes for granted (p. 192) that the Guimet drawing of a man reading is by Sayyed 'Ali. It is not, nor is it signed.
24. Wrongly so, in any case. *Sarlowb*, literally "head/top plate", describes an illuminated heading at the top of a page. See, for example, Dr Mehdi Bayani, *Ketabsbenasi-e Ketabha-ye Khatti* (Tehran 1353/1974), pl. 21.
25. The couplet is a *tazmin*, or verse incorporating a quotation. In this case the quotation is the second hemistich.
26. If "Mansur" really is a misreading for *mosavver*, as some believe, this leaves Qazi Ahmad's statement (see note 2) unexplained. On the other hand, "Manstūr" clashes with "Mohammad" given as the father's signature in the self-portrait in figure 3. The conundrum is unresolved. See Amin Ahmad Razi, *Haft Eqlim*, vol. II, p. 93. Homayunshahi: Nezam od-Din Ahmad, *Tabaqat-e Akbari*, vol. II, p. 504 notes that the artist relished this qualifier.
27. See below, note 37. The tone of the text which I have not yet been able to trace suggests the 9/15th or early 10/16th century.
28. Amina Okada, *Miniatures de l'Inde imperiale. Les peintres de la cour d'Akbar (1556-1605)* (Paris 1989), pp. 138-39. Reproduced p. 139, pl. 29.
29. *Akbar-Name*, vol. I, p. 340 and *Tabaqat-e-Akbari*, vol. II, p. 80: Homayun sets out to regain his Hindustan kingdom in mid-Zhu'l Hijja 961. He enters Delhi in Ramadan: *Tabaqat-e-Akbari*, vol. II, p. 83.
30. *Akbar-Name*, vol. I, p. 363: Homayun dies on Friday (does not state which one) in Rabi' I, 963 AH. *Tabaqat-e-Akbari*, vol. II, p. 84: dies on 15 Rabi' I, 963.
31. Ivan Stchoukine, *Miniatures indiennes du Musée du Louvre* (Paris 1929), pp. 11-12, nr. 2. Illustrated pl. IIa. Welch, *Wonders of the Age*, pp. 206-07, illustrated pl. 81. Dickson and Welch, *The Houghton Shahnameh*, vol. I, p. 189, reproduced p. 189, fig. 245. Okada, *Miniatures de l'Inde impériale*, pp. 130-31, fig. 25, and *Indian Miniatures of the Mughal Court*, illustrated p. 72, pl. 68 as a "Portrait of Mir Mosavvir signed Mir Sayyid Ali".
32. Okada, *ibid.*, p. 130 writes that "this is likely to be a posthumous portrait of the old Safavid master". The content of the "petition" that the old man holds strongly suggests the contrary. It would be meaningless, if the petitioner were not alive.
33. Qazi Ahmad, *Golestan-e Honar*, p. 139.
34. *Ibid.*, p. 139, same paragraph.
35. Lowry and Nemazee, *A Jeweler's Eye*, pp. 182-83, colour plate p. 183.
36. *Divan-e Kb'aje Hafez-e Shirazi*, ed. Sayyed Abo'l-Qasem Anjavi Shirazi (Tehran 1346/1967), p. 243.
37. L. Binyon, *The Poems of Nizami*, pl. XI (in colour) as "by Mirza Ali". Welch, *Royal Persian Manuscripts*, pp. 84-87, and *Wonders of the Age* (in colour), pp. 159-61. Welch also follows the later librarian's attribution to Mirza Ali. Repeated in Dickson and Welch, *The Houghton Shahnameh*, vol. I, pp. 130-33, reproduced fig. 180.
38. Never hitherto exactly identified in art historical literature: *Navaba'i bedin san rameshangiz—Hami zad Barbad dar bazm-e Parviz*. Nezami, *Khosrow o Shirin*, ed. Hasan Vahid Dastgerdi (Tehran 1313/1934), p. 194, l. 4.
39. Binyon, *The Poems of Nizami*, pl. VI, where the scene is recognized as "the portrait of Hosru shown to Shirin by Shapur". Miniature stated to be "by Mirza Ali". The "signature" in gilt *nasta'liq* is visible in the middle of the bottom margin. The inclusion of the word "*ostad*" tells it is not a signature. Welch, *Royal Persian Manuscripts*, pp. 80-81; Welch and Dickson, *The Houghton Shahnameh*, vol. I, pp. 130-32 (as the work of Mirza Ali).
40. Welch makes the extraordinary statement that: "something went wrong. Although the lines belong to the story of Shirin and Khusraw, the picture does not. To fit the words, it should depict Shirin falling in love with Khusraw from a portrait of him hung on a tree." Mistaken identification repeated in *The Houghton Shahnameh*, vol. I, pp. 130-32, reproduced fig. 179, p. 131. For the Persian original see Nezami, *Khosrow va Shirin*, ed. Hasan Vahid Dastgerdi, p. 60, l. 10-11. — ed. Hoseyn Pazhman Bakhtiyari (Tehran 1343/1964), p. 44, l. 12.
41. See note 4.
42. Welch, *Wonders of the Age*, pp. 178-79. Detail illustrated in colour on p. 179, where the "signature face" of the man appearing head and shoulders behind a mound, and of the woman washing laundry, are clearly visible. "Correctly ascribed to Mir Sayyed Ali." Dickson and Welch, *The Houghton Shahnameh*, vol. I, pp. 180-83, and fig. 238, p. 183. Milo Cleveland Beach, *Early Mughal Painting* (Cambridge, Mass. 1987), p. 12, fig. 2, "By Mir Sayyid Ali".
43. B.W. Robinson identified the miniature as a missing folio from the Quintet in *Persian Miniature Painting from Collections in the British Isles* (London 1967), pp. 55-56. Basil Grey, *Persian Painting* (Geneva 1961), p. 134. Welch, *Wonders of the Age*, pp. 176-77, as "attributable to Mir Sayyid-Ali". Welch and Dickson, *The Houghton Shahnameh*, vol. I, pp. 185-87.
44. Lowry and Nemazee, *op. cit.*, pp. 186-87. Colour plate, p. 187.
45. A number of other miniatures have been attributed to Mir Sayyed 'Ali by, among other writers, S.C. Welch. Some are unlikely to be by the same hand as the more securely established miniatures considered here. Others might. Neither could be discussed here for reasons of space, and are of interest to specialists only.
46. Mark Zebrowski, *Deccani Painting* (London 1983), p. 30, nr. 18, where it is "curiously attributed to the Deccani school in Ahmadnagar", to quote Amina Okada, *Miniatures de l'Inde imperiale*, p. 134; illustrated p. 135. See latterly, Okada, *Indian Miniatures of the Mughal Court*, p. 72, illus. p. 74. The caption states "signed Mir Sayyid Ali", but this seems to be due to the translation: in her 1988 text, Okada clearly shows she considers, rightly so, the name to be an "inscription", not a signature, and cautiously raises the possibility that this could be an autograph work of the painter in his old age. This seems to me to be unlikely for the reasons stated.

In the *a'in-i taswirkhana* section of his *A'in-i Akbari* Abu'l Fazl perceives Daswant as the finest among the leading painters of the Mughal studio after the Persian masters Mir Sayyid 'Ali and Khwaja 'Abd us-Samad. He writes:

Then there was Daswant, the son of a palanquin-bearer (*kabar*), who was in the service of this workshop and, urged by a natural desire, used to draw images and designs on walls. One day the far-reaching glance of His Majesty fell on those things and, in its penetrating manner, discerned the spirit of a master working in them. Consequently, His Majesty entrusted him to the Khwaja. In just a short time he became matchless in his time and the most excellent (*sar-amad-i ruzgar*), but the darkness of insanity enshrouded the brilliance of his mind and he died, a suicide. He has left several masterpieces.¹

The tragic and untimely end of Daswant is also noted by Abu'l Fazl amongst the events of 1584 in the official biography of Akbar, the *Akbarnama*:

One of the occurrences was the death of the painter Daswanth. He was the son of a *Kabar*. The acuteness and appreciativeness of the world's lord brought his great artistic talents to notice. His paintings were not behind those of Bihzad and the painters of China. All at once melancholy took possession of him, and he wounded himself with a dagger. After two days he paid back the loan of life, and grief came to the hearts of connoisseurs.²

It is clear from these remarks that Daswant, a member of the lowly palanquin-bearer community, was working in the *taswirkhana* in a minor position. Some of his spontaneous drawings on palace walls greatly impressed Emperor Akbar who put him under Khwaja 'Abd us-Samad. Within a short time he rose to the top of the hierarchy by his exceptional talent and skill, but suffering from a bout of melancholia he committed suicide in 1584. At that time the imperial court was at Fatehpur Sikri and the painters of the *taswirkhana* were busy illustrating the great *Razmnama* manuscript, the Persian translation of the Mahabharata. Daswant had a major role, composing and drawing as many as 31 full-page miniatures out of its first 125 pictures designed till the time of his tragic end. The MS was completed two years later with a total of 169 matchless paintings breaking new ground and creating new images.

No further information on Daswant has been found in any other contemporary or later work. Any assessment of his style is thus entirely dependent on the surviving works bearing his name. In spite of Abu'l Fazl's specific comment that he left several masterpieces, very few of his paintings are known, perhaps because the activities of Akbar's *taswirkhana* up to the time of Daswant's death are not well recorded. We are aware of its preoccupation with the preparation of the gigantic series of 1,400 cloth paintings for the *Dastan-i Amir Hamza*, and also with extensive embellishment on the walls of several buildings of Agra and Fatehpur Sikri. Daswant was undoubtedly an active participant in these works, though no specific example could be cited, as the murals have all but perished and not more than ten per cent of the *Hamza* paintings have survived. In the half-dozen illustrated manuscripts prepared at this time, the paintings are mostly unsigned and unattributed. Daswant's name has been noticed only in two manuscripts: the *Tutinama* in the Cleveland Museum of Art³ and the *Tarikh-i Khandan-i Timuriyya* in the Khuda Bakhsh Oriental Library, Patna.⁴ Both the manuscripts are undated. Unfortunately, the *Razmnama*, the only manuscript containing ninety per cent of Daswant's surviving output, is not available for detailed examination, and the study of his work is made entirely on the platinum prints made in 1881 at the instance of Thomas Holbein Hendley, the Surgeon-General of Jaipur State.⁵ Due to these unfortunate circumstances, the most

1. "Arjuna hitting the target". Outline by Daswant, colouring by Kesav. No. AG 1690.

highly rated painter of Akbar's *taswirkhana* has remained virtually unheralded and even unknown.

In the four-volume *Razmnama* manuscript Daswant drew the outline of fifteen paintings (including a double-page composition counted as one) out of seventy-four in the first volume, nine out of seventeen in the considerably slimmer second volume, and only six out of the sixty miniatures of the third volume. As indicated on the margins of some miniatures, the finishing stage was not reached until the beginning of 1586, long after his death.⁶ We have no means of knowing if the *colouring* of his compositions conformed to his own ideas. There are six double-page compositions among the thirty-one pictures outlined by him and four paintings were composed in the traditional horizontal format.⁷ Incidentally, this is the only major Mughal manuscript where as many as thirteen paintings have been composed in the horizontal format — twelve towards the end of the first volume and one in the beginning of the second volume. As these are battle scenes showing rival forces confronting each other, the oblong format has facilitated the designer's showing the large number of participants and related details within one page. For court scenes and scenes containing many details the preferred mode was double-page composition, an old device common in Persian painting and adopted freely by the painters of the Mughal *taswirkhana*.

The subjects chosen by Daswant are varied and appealing: court scenes, battle scenes, scenes of dramatic action and unusual events. While the battle and action scenes depict drama and fury of rapid and violent movement, the court scenes display the splendour and orderliness of court life. In the remaining scenes he takes great care to depict nature — craggy hills, sinuous trees, chirping birds, lively animals, gushing waters, and the changing visage of the sky at different hours of day and night. He pays special attention to showing the characters in an appropriate mood — placid or violent, intoxicated with power or subdued by ignominious defeat. In all his works there is a conscious effort to highlight the core of the story by placing it in the central focal point and making all other elements and details accessory to it. His approach is straightforward and effective. His first work in the *Razmnama*, "Arjuna hitting the target" (figure 1) is an excellent example of his style of story-telling. The composition is divided into two well-marked parts by the diagonal placing of the floral carpet accommodating the motley crowd of kings assembled in King Drupada's capital to participate in Draupadi's *svayamvara* ceremony. In the other half he has placed Arjuna, clad in red *dboti-chadar*, at the centre of attention. The giant cauldron of hot oil placed over a fire dominates the lower part. The long shaft of the device with the replica of a fish behind a revolving wheel at its top and the wavy lines of hilly tracts behind effectively combine the two parts. The empty greenish-straw-coloured grounds provide a contrast to the crowds of wonderstruck kings and revelling citizens who marvel at Arjuna's spectacular feat of hitting the target. The glowing flames of the fire, the dry firewood, the patch of blue around the fish device, and the people expressing awe, wonder, disbelief, appreciation, or dismay are characteristic of Daswant's personal style. The colouring and finishing were done by Kesav, who himself was soon to blossom as an accomplished painter excelling both in composition and portrait painting.

In another remarkable painting, "Krishna beheading King Shishupala" (figure 2), Daswant effectively used similar devices to show the tragic end of the vain king. Shishupala invited the wrath of Krishna by hurling a barrage of insults at him, forcing him to take the extreme step of using the never-failing weapon, the *sudarsban chakra*, to cut off Shishupala's head. According to the text an effulgent ray emerged from the headless body of the slain king, touched the feet of Krishna, his benefactor, and entered Krishna's body. Lightning flashed and thunder pealed; the Pandava brothers, kings, and brahmins assembled to witness Yudhishtira's sacrifice became speechless in wonder and amazement. Daswant placed Krishna and Shishupala at the centre of a semi-circular

2. "Krishna beheading King Shishupala". Outline by Daswant, colouring by Ramdas. No. AG 1693.



composition, with the Pandava brothers seated outside the pavilion and the row of people in the lower portion, all looking up at the luminous arched ray emerging from the neck of the slain Shishupala. The painting was finished by Ramdas, an active participant in many paintings of both the *Razmnama* and the *Ramayana* completed soon afterwards.

In the scene "Descent of Ganga", *Gangavatarana* (figure 3), the atmosphere is placid and quieter. King Bhagiratha is leading the way for the gushing waters of Ganga that have descended from the Himalaya on the knotted locks of Lord Shiva. Daswant was definitely a plainsman, as his picturization of the mighty Himalaya and Gangotri betrays his lack of first-hand knowledge of their majesty and ethereal beauty. The stylized broad-leaved trees, flowering plants, shrubs, and the pairs of jackals and birds create an air of tranquil serenity noticed in two other miniatures designed by him.⁸ It was completed by Bhaura, a prolific painter who worked on all major Akbari manuscripts.

The scene of Arjuna's arrival in Indra's court composed by Daswant and completed by Banwari (figure 4) is an excellent example of court scenes as depicted by the painters of Akbar's *taswirkhana*. In Indra's paradisaical court at Amaravati there is eternal spring with the sweet everlasting fragrance of flowers and heavenly music. Celestial musicians like Tumburu and female dancers of eternal youth such as Urvashi, Menaka, and Rambha are in constant attendance. In Daswant's wonderful study, Indra, king of the gods, with eyes all over his fair body, is seated on a tiered golden throne placed on a "shaped" floral carpet, conversing with Arjuna, seated to his right. Bands of musicians playing various instruments, vocalists, dancers, and attendants carrying royal paraphernalia, flowers, fruits, and victuals surround them while two female dancers are shown in a difficult Kathak pose. One gets glimpses of the paradisaical garden behind the throne pavilion, with flowering trees full of singing birds and a pair of preening peafowl. Golden stars dot the deep blue night sky bathed in the light of the gleaming half-moon. Daswant has with great mastery succeeded in creating the festive atmosphere of Indra's heavenly court.

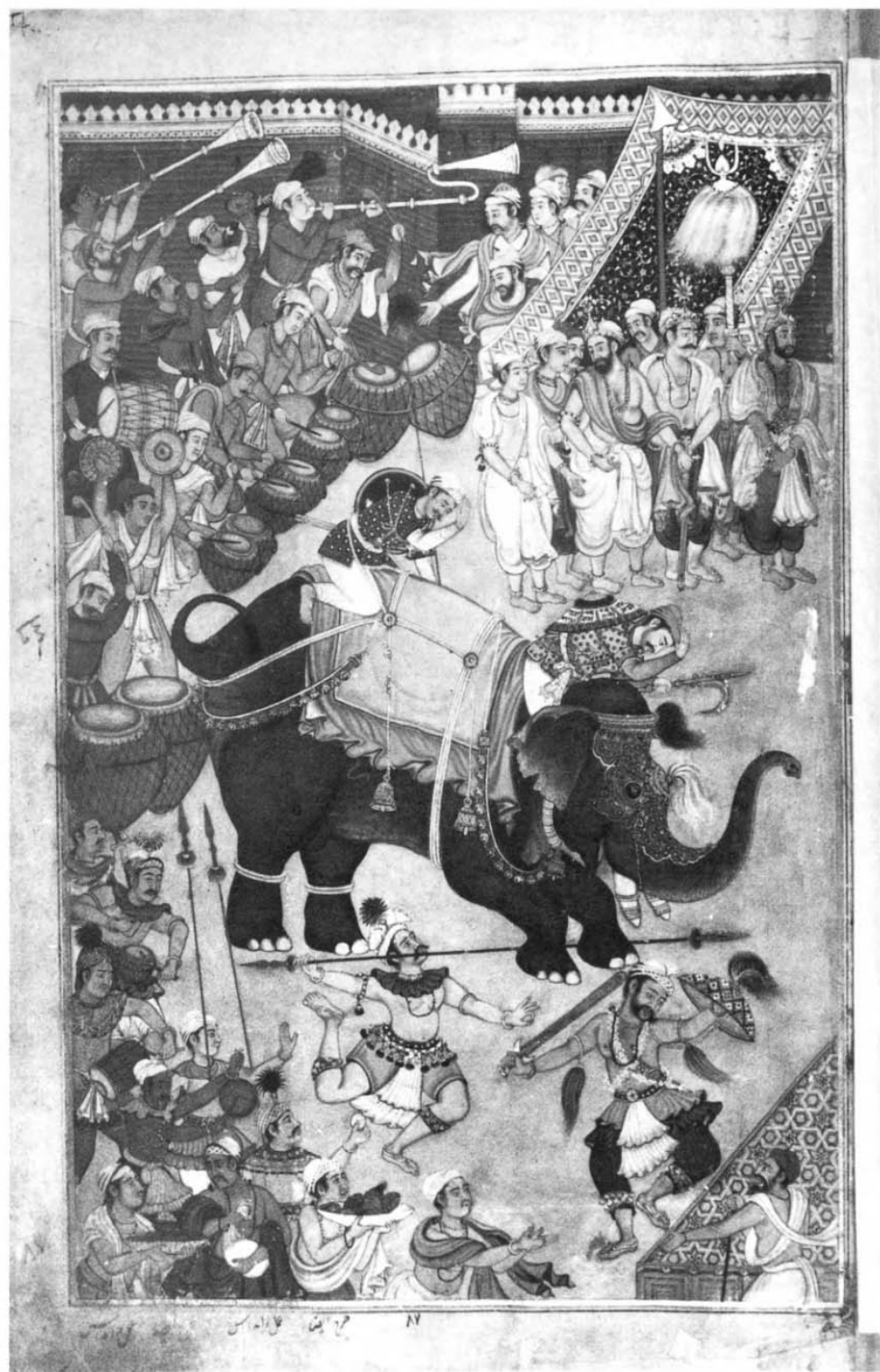


4. "Arjuna arrives in Indra's court". Outline by Daswant, colouring by Banwari. No. AG 1697.

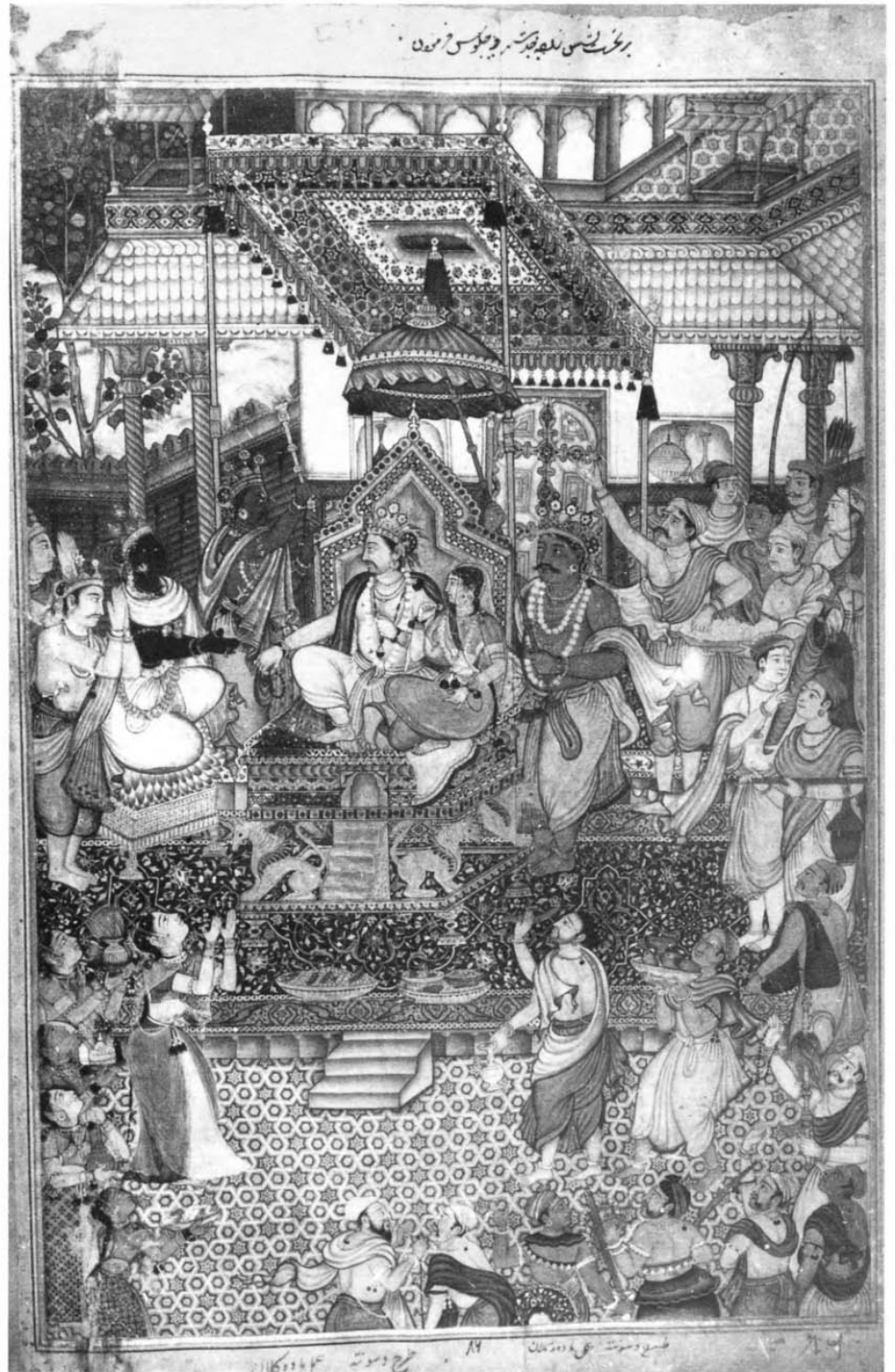


The double-page composition towards the end of the second volume showing Yudhishtira's installation as king and the prolonged celebrations at Hastinapur (figures 5 and 6) is another excellent example of Daswant's creativity. While trying to visualize the installation of Yudhishtira, he has in fact meticulously recreated the Mughal court in its splendour. The architectural details, the intricately designed medallion carpet, the opulent golden throne, the richly designed velvet canopy, the huge royal elephant, the row of *naqqara* players, the pair of male dancers, the female singers, attendants, and onlookers, all appear familiar to us from the accounts of contemporary visitors to the Mughal court and visual renderings in historical and biographical manuscripts prepared in the next few years. Daswant, a keen observer of people and events, witnessed Akbar's grand court at first hand, and reproduced every single detail in this double-page composition with merely the dramatis personae changed. The difference is marked in the right half of the composition, where Yudhishtira and his consort Draupadi are seated on the throne, flanked by the amply proportioned Bhima holding the parasol and Arjuna wielding the *chauri*, with Krishna seated on another throne in front of them. The left half, however, has little to show this difference. Madhav Kalan completed the right half and Ramdas the left half by applying colours (*rang-amezi*).

Daswant created an equally effective composition in another double-page work illustrating "Krishna's reception at the instance of Yudhishtira" (figures 7 and 8), coloured



5 and 6. "Installation of Yudhishtira". Outline by Daswant, colouring by Ramdas (5) and Madhav Kalan (6). Nos. AG 1768, 1767.



7 and 8. "Krishna's reception at the instance of Yudhishthira". Outline by Daswant, colouring by Tara and Ramdas (both left and right). Nos. AG 1783, 1782.



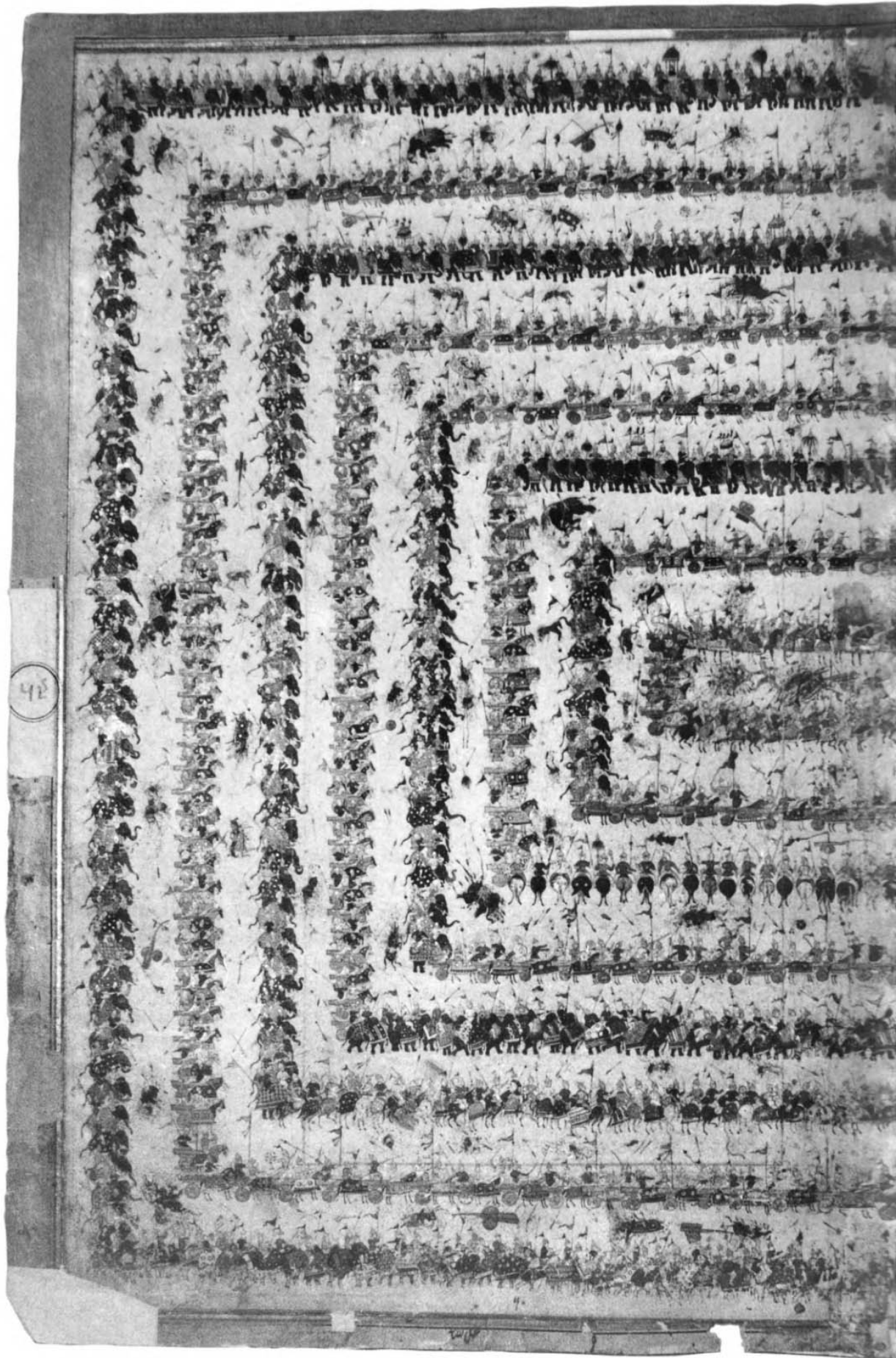
by Tara and Ramdas. On both pages there are numerous figures grouped in different areas, absorbed in their respective roles. The left page shows Krishna seated on a golden throne in an opulent setting of tents and *kanats*. The colourful awning above his circular *Yaquti* tent is decorated with a beautifully painted hanging. In the right half King Yudhishthira sits on a floral carpet under a rectangular *shamiana*, with a large number of people around him engaged in various activities. The arrangements of tents, awnings, and *kanats* and the crowd of people leave enough space to transfix the attention on the principal characters of Krishna and Yudhishthira.

Another extremely satisfactory composition is the scene of the great feast at Hastinapur drawn by Daswant and completed by Bhaura (AG 1785)⁹ where the five Pandava brothers and Krishna occupy the central part while hosts of musicians, womenfolk, attendants, retainers, and others crowd around them. There is one more court scene showing the appointment of Bhima as the commander-in-chief (AG 1731)¹⁰ and another double-page composition showing perhaps the most remarkable painting in this manuscript — the scene of Abhimanyu's Chakravyuha (figure 9). Thousands of foot soldiers, cavalry, elephant riders, and chariot riders have been arranged in a maze-like formation occupying the entire surface of the double page (39.5 x 52 cm), the like of which had never been, and would never again be attempted in the Mughal *taswirkhana*. Tulsi Kalan assisted Daswant in this unique work.

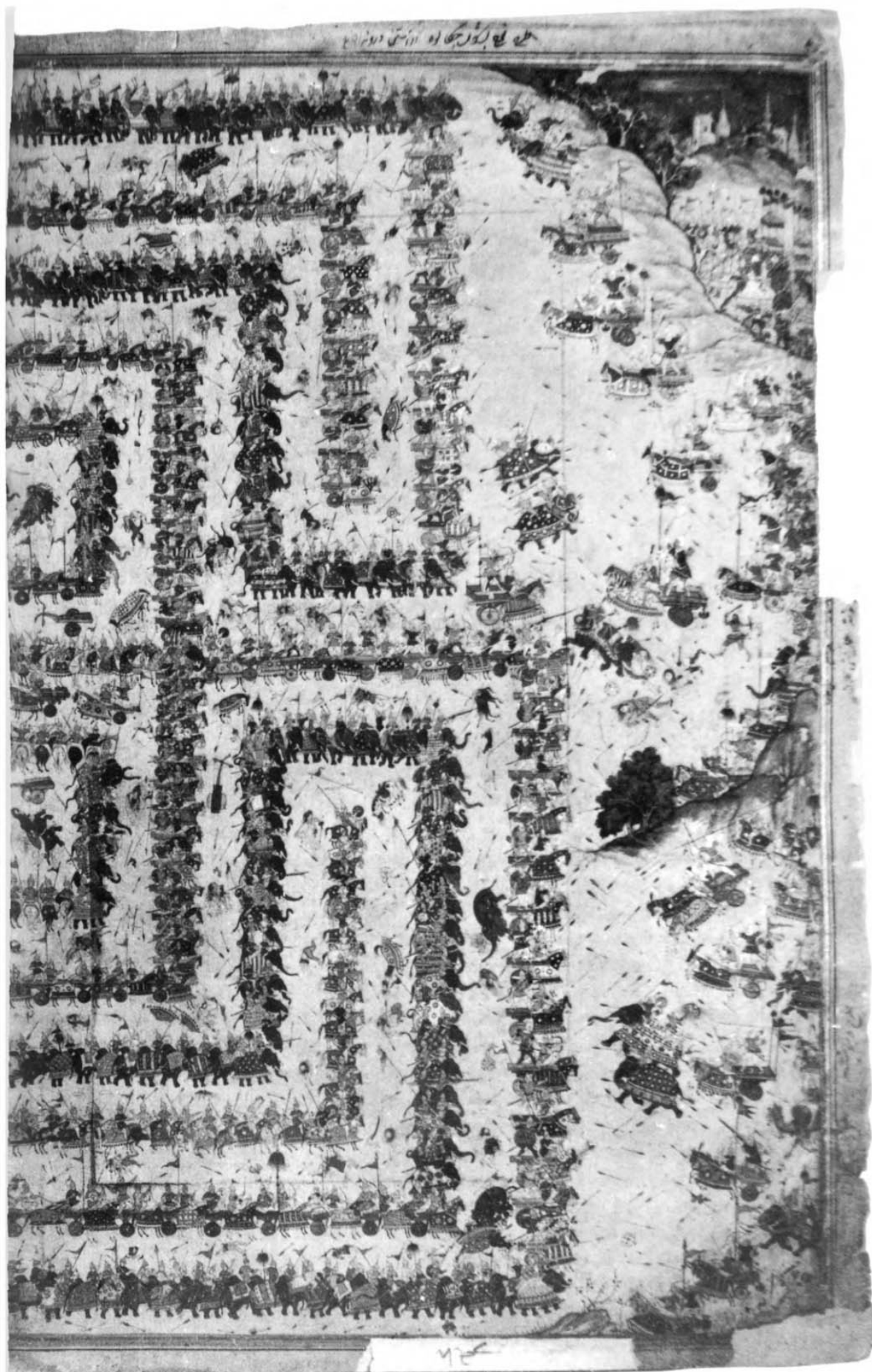


Drama and action are the keynote of the double-page composition illustrating the battle between Karna and Arjuna (figures 10 and 11), a key event having a decisive effect in the Mahabharata war. Arjuna riding the chariot driven by Krishna has just beheaded Karna by shooting the deadliest *Anjalak-vana* shown on the facing page. A burning ray of power has emerged from the severed body of Karna and merged with the sun. In the right half Daswant, assisted by Paras, has drawn a crowded and colourful composition with Arjuna's chariot in the centre. Trees, hillocks, the four Pandava brothers and their prominent followers on chariots and elephantback, and their retinue form a half circle around it. The sky is full of swirling "Chinese" clouds with Brahma, Shiva, and Indra witnessing the fight and celestial musicians blowing trumpets and playing drums. The left half, to provide a contrast, is relatively uncluttered. The mood is sombre with the violent end of Karna. The Kaurava warriors and their retinue cluster around the diagonally placed chariot of Karna whose wheels have mysteriously stuck in the mud. Karna's demoniac followers are shown in another cluster in the top right corner to complete the half circle. This page was coloured by two painters, Mukhlis and Madhav Khurd. Mukhlis, in a rare instance, has signed his name on the ground above the chariot. Near the edge of the outer margin of the painting a clerical note written in Shikastah gives the date of completion, 20 Safar, AH 993 (February 21, 1585).¹¹ This indicates the long time the colourists took to complete the outline drawn by Daswant before his death in 1584.

9. "Chakravyuha: the tragic death of Abhimanyu".
Outline by Daswant,
colouring by Tulsi Kalan
(both left and right halves).
No. AG 1741.



طی فی کونجی ده اوستی دونه



10 and 11. "Arjuna fells Karna". Outline by Daswant, colouring by Mukhlis and Madhav Khurd (left) and Paras (right). Nos. AG 1756, 1755.



While comparing the miniatures of the *Harivamsa* manuscript prepared separately at a slightly later date with the concluding volume of the *Razmnama* dealing with the *Harivamsa* stories, Robert Skelton briefly refers to Daswant and his influence on the illustrations of the *Razmnama*. Since Daswant suffered from bouts of melancholia, and finally committed suicide, Skelton suggests that "the subordination of compositional logic in favour of imaginative expressiveness (bordering in some cases on hallucinatory excitement)" was partly due to Daswant's mental instability.¹² Quite a few of his works in the manuscript show the gory violence and vicious actions of feuding warriors as described in the Great Epics — that is, the fight of Rama and Ravana (AG 1714),¹³ the great battle of the Mahabharata shown in two horizontal compositions (AG 1736-1737),¹⁴ four consecutive scenes showing Ashvathama's nocturnal skirmishes, the massacre of the younger Pandava offspring in the darkness of midnight, and the rise of the dark ghoulish *Kala-ratri* from the dead body of Shikhandin to drink the blood of the dead (AG 1761-1764),¹⁵ and the episode of the defeat of Hanumana by Lava and Kusha (AG 1807).¹⁶ However, both the Mahabharata and Ramayana are sagas of heroism where the mighty and brave who ruthlessly annihilate the enemy are hailed. These pictures, therefore, should not cause any surprise. On a closer look they seem to be composed carefully in a rational alignment of diagonals, circles, and half-circles, perfectly balanced with architectural or natural surroundings. In fact, the scene of Ashvathama's entry into the Pandava camp (AG 1761) is a superb example of Daswant's keen observation of



night life both within the camp and outside. The disposition of stylized hills acting almost as a halo behind the head of Shiva seated on guard at the camp entrance, the figure of Krishna watching the scene from the clouds, and the stillness of the night shown through the unmoving leaves of the tall tree in the upper right corner amply display his skill in maintaining a perfect balance between the various elements of the story.

At another level the pictures of Bhima thrashing Kichaka (AG 1723)¹⁷ or ruthlessly killing the 105 Upakichakas (AG 1724),¹⁸ of the rise of King Prithu (figure 12), of the sylvan surroundings in the pictures of Krishna and the Pandavas asking questions to the detached head of Barbarika (AG 1766), and the arrival of Dharma in the guise of a Brahmin (AG 1774) show with what ease and dexterity Daswant could transfix the viewer's attention on the core of the episode.

Early in the manuscript Daswant composed the picture of the story of the Giant Fish rescuing the living world from the great deluge (figure 13). In this remarkable composition Daswant placed the giant ark diagonally, complete with pairs of birds perching on selected trees, a pair each of wild and domesticated beasts, and some men and women. Surging sea waves fill the entire space and create the effect of the vast expanse of the earth's surface now under the deluge. The sage Vaivasvata Manu is shown tying this giant boat to the peaks of the Himalaya. The painter assisting Daswant here was Kanha who graduated into a major painter within a short time and specialized in studies of flora and fauna.



12. "The rise of King Prithu". Outline by Daswant, colouring by Miskina. No. AG 1769.



13. "Matsya Avatara rescuing the living world from the great deluge". Outline by Daswant, colouring by Kanha. No. AG 1703.

Daswant was totally at ease in delineating the details of the Mahabharata story and took great care in drawing the figures of gods, demi-gods, and the principal characters of the Kauravas and Pandavas. Like his mentor Khwaja 'Abd us-Samad, he paid close attention to the characters in their infinite moods and appearances, as also to the details of plant and animal life, to the hills shown as tiered ridges or polychrome outcrops, and to the sky, specially the star-studded, moonlit, deep-blue night sky. His paintings reveal his knowledge of perspective as suggested by the larger size of the foreground figures and the gradually receding background with accurately drawn architectural details and smaller figures.

Some of his works, like Arjuna shooting the arrow (see figure 1), or the seventh adventure of the white horse (AG 1799)¹⁹ show definite indications of Daswant's familiarity with Western painting technique and idiom. At least two painters associated with him, Miskina and Kesavdas, blossomed within a short time as major masters placed high in Abu'l Fazl's list of leading painters of Akbar's *taswirkhana*, carrying every stylistic nuance apparent in his works to its logical development. Other painters associated with Daswant in the *Razmnama* who were included in Abu'l Fazl's list are Mahesh, Madhav, Tara, and Ramdas. Though Kanha, Tulsi, Banwari, Bhagwan, and Sarwan do not find a place in this list, they made their mark in course of time as painters of great distinction. All of them owe a lot to Daswant's creative genius.

Notes

This essay forms a part of the author's work as a Jawaharlal Nehru Fellow.

1. Pramod Chandra, *Tutinama — Tales of a Parrot, Commentarium* (Graz 1976), p. 183 (revised translation of *A'in-i Akbari* text, I, pp. 116-18 by Prof. C.M. Naim).
2. *The Akbarnama of Abu'l Fazl*, tr. H. Beveridge, first Indian reprint (New Delhi 1973), vol. III, p. 651.
3. Folio 32b: Chandra, op.cit., pp. 89-90. He also attributes the picture on f. 37b on the basis of a partially damaged inscription and the one on f. 32a on stylistic grounds to Daswant. See also Milo Beach, "The Mughal Painter Daswanth", *Art Orientalis*, XIII, 1982, pp. 123-24, figs. 6, 8. For a new assessment of this important MS and the problems associated with it, see: J. Seyller, "Overpainting in the Cleveland *Tutinama*", *Artibus Asiae*, 52, nos. 3/4, 1992, pp. 283-318.
4. A detail of the painting is reproduced in colour by R. Godden, *Gulbadan* (London 1980), plate on p. 35.
5. Most of these were published in a limited edition deluxe volume with original photo prints: T.H. Hendley, *Memorials of the Jeypore Exhibition 1883*, vol. 4 (London 1884).
6. Robert Skelton, "Mughal Paintings from the Harivamsa Manuscript", *V & A Yearbook*, 2, 1970, p. 48. Skelton was the first scholar to note these nearly illegible scribal notes on the margins of several miniatures of the *Razmnama*. See also John Seyller, "Codicological Aspects of the Victoria and Albert Museum *Akbarnama* and Their Historical Implication", *Art Journal* (New York 1990), p. 383, note 41. He noticed a similar noting on the outer margin of AG 1756 (see figure 10) yielding the date February 21, 1585.
7. All but one (AG 1699 — reproduced here for the first time as figure 3) were included by Hendley in his catalogue.
8. Hendley, op. cit., plates LXXI (AG 1766, Pandavas asking the detached head of Barbarika questions) and LXXVIII (AG 1774, Arrival of Dharma in the guise of a Brahmin).
9. Ibid., plate LXXXVIII.
10. Ibid., plate XXXIX.
11. Skelton, op. cit., p. 48.
12. Ibid., p. 52; Beach, op. cit., shares this view, pp. 121-24.
13. Hendley, op. cit., plate XXIV.
14. Ibid., plates XLIII bis, XLIII; P. Banerjee, *The Life of Krishna in Indian Art* (New Delhi 1979), fig. 252 (AG 1736).
15. Hendley, op. cit., plates LXVII, LXVIII, LXX, LXIX; Beach, op. cit., fig. 3 (AG 1764); W. Staude, "Daswanth", *Encyclopedia of World Art*, IV (New York 1958), plates 112 (AG 1761), 113 (AG 1762).
16. Hendley, op. cit., plate CVIII.
17. Ibid., plate XXXII; Staude, op. cit., plate 112.
18. Hendley, op. cit., plate XXXIII; Beach, op. cit., fig. 2.
19. Hendley, op. cit., plate C.



La'l: The Forgotten Master

Som Prakash Verma

Abu'l Fazl lists La'l among the seventeen leading painters of Akbar's court.¹ We do not know whether this list was based on a perceived hierarchy of merit; his place in the list (number six) most likely reflects his position in qualitative terms. La'l was the most prolific painter of the Mughal school, as can be judged by the large number of surviving miniatures (140 in all) signed by or ascribed to him.²

These miniatures are contained in various manuscripts: the *Razmnama* (circa 1583-86; Maharaja Sawai Man Singh II Museum, Jaipur); *Tarikh-i Khandan-i Timuria* (circa 1584-87; Khuda Bakhsh Oriental Library, Patna); *Ramayana* (1589; Maharaja Sawai Man Singh II Museum, Jaipur); *Khamsa* of Nizami (circa 1585-90; Keir Collection, Pontresina); *Jami' ut-Tawarikh* (1598; Imperial Library, Tehran); *Anwar-i Subaili* (1596-97; Bharat Kala Bhavan, Varanasi); *Baburnama* (circa 1590-1600; dispersed, with portions in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London); *Khamsa* of Nizami (1596-97; British Library, London); *Khamsa* of Amir Khusrau (1597-98; Walters Art Gallery, Baltimore); and *Akbarnama* (circa 1600-05; Victoria and Albert Museum, London; Chester Beatty Library, Dublin; and British Library, London). All these manuscripts belong to the years 1582-1605, which mark the most active period of the artist. Besides, there are stray folios and album pictures ascribed to La'l in the Musée Guimet, Paris; Cincinnati Art Museum; Hans P. Kraus Collection, New York; and Royal Library, Windsor. However, no miniature ascribed to La'l may fairly be placed in Jahangir's reign (1605-27).

La'l earned recognition in various branches of painting, especially in outline drawing (*tarb*) and portrait painting (*chibra nami* or *nami chibra*). In most of the miniatures finished in collaboration with other painters, La'l did the "line drawing" or "sketching". 'Abdulla, Bhura, Dhanu, Dhanwan, Jagiwan, Jamshed, Khem, Khemkaran, Chatarbhuji, Ibrahim, Madhav, Mukhlis, Mukund, Nanha, Sanwala, Shankar, Surjan, and Yaqub Kashmiri are the major painters who collaborated with him. Interestingly, this long list includes such established artists as Khemkaran, Madhav, Mukund, and Sanwala, reckoned by Abu'l Fazl to be among the leading artists of Akbar's court.³

From the earliest group of twenty-nine paintings by La'l in the *Razmnama* MS,⁴ an illustration called "Birth of Parikshit" (figure 2) is of great interest. Its complicated composition, comprising three units held together by the architectural columns, arranged in a zig-zag order, is clearly an improvement on the single-scene representation seen in pre-Mughal visual narratives. The units represent the queen-mother being nursed by maids in attendance, the king admiring the baby and the holy men congratulating him on this auspicious occasion, and lastly, outside the palace, alms being distributed to the poor. These units revolve around the central theme and make the representation of the event more elaborate and descriptive. The Mughal painter freely used the method of division of the visual field to impart to his narratives a sense of continuity in scene — a technique equally in vogue in the fifteenth-sixteenth century art of manuscript painting of Persia. However, in Persian narrative art, the units remained isolated in the absence of the artist's effort to establish some kind of relationship between them. The Mughal artist rectified this shortcoming and succeeded in connecting the units through rhythmic movements, gestures, and facial expressions.

In La'l's miniature, the stereotype depiction of female figures almost identical to the *Chaurapanchasika* type, also seen earlier in the *Hamzanama* paintings (circa 1556-80), seems to have been followed. Interestingly, the figure of the queen-mother is imbued with European feeling and the treatment of costumes with rhythmic heavy folds seems to have been adapted from some Western engraving. Besides, the treatment of garments such as shawls and the curtains hanging in the women's quarters with heavy folds and deep shading has affinity with the European technique. Further, the deep shading employed in the architectural columns hints at the attempt to present the building in a diagonal view. Interestingly, the illustrations connected with the theme of birth executed later in the *Akbarnama* follow La'l's example.⁵

1. "Mourning at court". 1596-97. By La'l. *Anwar-i Subaili*, Bharat Kala Bhavan, Varanasi, no. 9069, folio 134.



2. "Birth of Parikshit".
Circa 1582-85. Drawn by
Mukund and painted by
La'l. *Razmnama*, Maharaja
Sawai Man Singh II
Museum, Jaipur.

Next in order of chronology are the eleven miniatures ascribed to La'l in the *Tarikh-i Khandan-i Timuria*, where La'l has only done the "drawing", with the exception of the miniature executed on folio 284 where he has also retouched the portraits. None of these paintings of La'l has been published. In general, these compositions, though charged with action, appear crowded. There is a constant attempt at creating an optical illusion of depth and distance in the scene by introducing a view of the distant landscape comprising buildings and massed clumps of trees in a diminutive scale and blurred in detail and colour effect. The miniature on folio 65, "Battle between Timur and Tughtamish Khan" (figure 3) is the best representative of this. La'l, following the scientific perspective derived from European examples, has drawn the human figures in the distant background slightly reduced in scale compared with their counterparts in the foreground. However, the rendering of the objects in smaller scale does not correspond with the gradual increase in distance: it would suggest that either the Mughal painter did not understand perspective correctly, or he retained the Persian perspective in which the superimposition of figures denoted depth in the picture plane. The portrait of Humayun executed by La'l in "Tardi Beg Khan conveys the news of Akbar's birth to Humayun" on folio 284 seems to have been adapted from an earlier portrait of this ruler, seen in the miniature "Humayun and his brothers in the landscape" (circa 1550).⁶

3. "Battle between Timur and Tughtamish Khan". Circa 1584-87. Drawn by La'l and painted by Naman. *Tarikh-i Khandan-i Timuria*, (Khuda Bakhsh) Oriental Public Library, Patna, folio 65b.



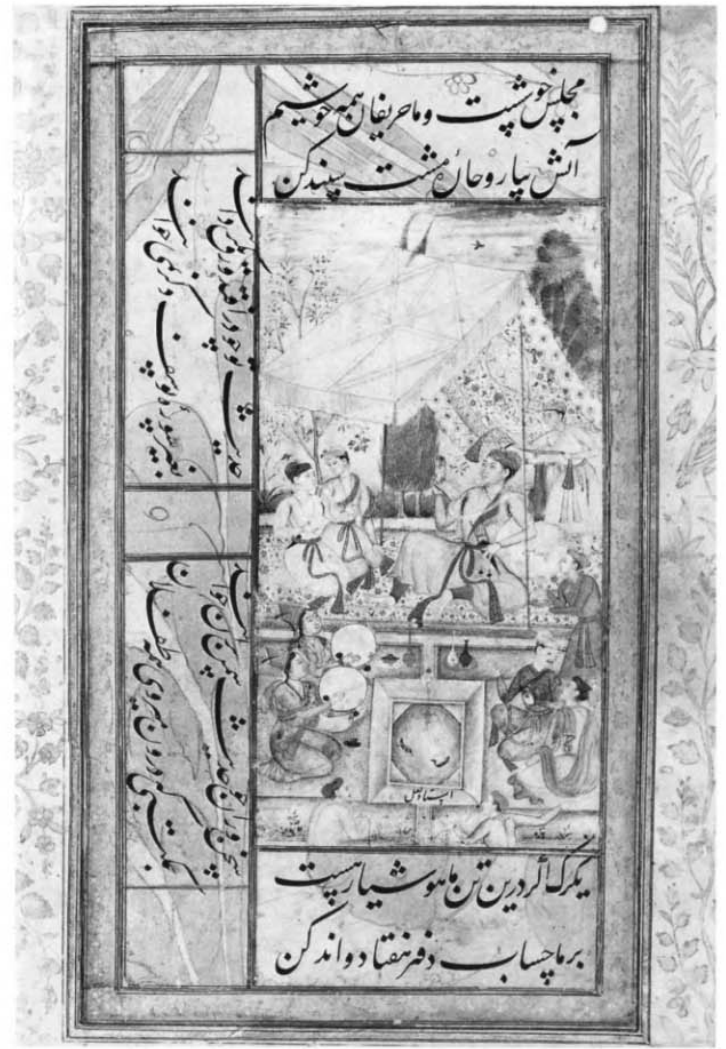
La'l, one of the principal illustrators of the *Ramayana* manuscript, executed line drawings of no less than thirty-seven paintings which were "coloured" ('amal) by Bhura, Dhanwan, Sanwala, Kesu *Khurud*, Dhanu, Nanha, Madhav *Kalan*, Mandu *Kalan*, Sarwan, Kesav Gujarati, Surya Gujarati, Narayan, Banwari *Kalan*, Nand, Bhagwan, Dharmdas, Bhawani, Jagjiwan, Madha *Chela*, and Surjiv Gujarati.⁷ These miniatures exhibit La'l's skill in the handling of human figures, depicting a variety of gestures, facial moods, and expressions. In the compositions, though sometimes crowded, the rhythmic movement of the figures is not restricted. In the miniature "Bharadwaja entertains Bharata" (figure 4) the foreground sprigged with flowering plants and the profusely ornate architectural columns embellished with geometrical patterns are reminiscent of Persian art. The realistic treatment of human figures in Mughal art becomes emphatic with the incorporation of the European technique of figure modelling, and deep shading applied especially in the treatment of garments.

In the *Khamsa* of Nizami in the Keir Collection to which the Mughal pictures were added during 1585-90, in all the six miniatures ascribed to him La'l is only responsible for the drawings. In the miniature "Battle between Khusrau and Bahram Chubina", one observes a preference for Persian perspective and the figures are composed in a vertical plane.⁸ The graded tonal variations in the treatment of landscape give a feeling of spatial



5. "A prince with scholars". Circa 1590. Painted by La'l. Royal Library, Windsor Castle, no. B.20, folio 2a. The Royal Collection © Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II.

6. "Poetry recital and female musicians". Circa 1590. Painted by *Ustad* La'l. Royal Library, Windsor Castle, no. B.20, folio 4a. The Royal Collection © Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II.



depth and distance, and, to an extent, discourage the tilting effect felt in the composition. The action reported in the figures enlivens the scene. Another miniature "Laila and Majnun" from the same manuscript, characteristically close to Persian trends, is significant for the striking portrait of the teacher.⁹

Two miniatures of La'l, preserved in an album (B.20) at the Royal Library, Windsor, "A prince with scholars" and "Poetry recital and female musicians" (both circa 1590), can be discussed together since in both the main character poised identically represents the same individual; and their compositions are similar (figures 5 and 6). Here also the figures are drawn in accordance with Persian perspective, imparting a tilting effect to the picture plane. The bird's-eye view of the tank in the middle of the foreground, and the geometrical patterning on the floor area (figure 5) further add to this effect. Tall cypresses, plants with flower-laden branches, and sprigs of small plants in the foreground, are other elements of Persian art shared by the pictures. The floral ornamentation of the carpet and the tent (*shamiana*) consisting of stylized patterns of flowers, leaves, and curvilinear forms further testify to the proximity of La'l's work with Persian painting. It is noticeable that the male figures appear distinct and varied in expression, whereas the female figures of musicians are stereotypes.

Technically, both these works of La'l, exhibiting thin colouring and light shading, may be described as close to the *nim qalam* technique practised by other contemporary painters like Hiranand and Shankar.¹⁰ Another work by La'l in this technique is seen in the Chester Beatty Library MS of the *Akbarnama* (see figures 8 and 9). These miniatures hint at the introduction of a novel technique at the imperial Mughal studio.

Ten miniatures ascribed to La'l ("drawing") in the MS *Jami' ut-Tawarikh* also demonstrate great affinity with Persian trends — for instance, the bird's-eye view of carpet, tent, etc. and the direct view of buildings.¹¹ In the embellishment of the carpets, floors, and the architectural columns, too, Persian motifs and designs are freely used. Here the depiction of craggy hills with modulated contours, though simplified, is reminiscent of their depiction in the Timurid art of the fifteenth-sixteenth centuries. Women from varying strata of society depicted in La'l's work bear Mongol features. Nevertheless, La'l's originality lies in the faithful rendering of human figures, endowed with a wealth of emotion which leaves the onlooker spellbound and absorbed by the action taking place in the scene.

Two paintings of La'l in the *Anwar-i Subhaili*, "Mourning at court" (figure 1) and "Farmer's young wife elopes with a prince" (figure 7) are of great interest since these hint at the admixture of Persian and European elements in our painter's work in a vivid manner, and in general at the Mughal atelier towards the close of the sixteenth century. In the miniature "Mourning at court", the symmetrical composition comprising groups of men lined up vertically on either side without the concept of spatial depth, is formal in setting and close to the Persian mannerism. Here the bird's-eye depiction of the hexagonal canopy and the tent spread in front of it further show the dominance of the Persian trend of multiple perspective. In the present scene, only shaded strokes are employed in the foreground, throwing figures into relief. These are the evidence of an attempt to relate spatial depth to the flatness of surface. Of course, the conflict and compromise between a two-dimensional surface and a three-dimensional vision remains unresolved. It is amply clear in both the paintings where human figures are drawn in direct view, unaffected by their placement in the picture plane at varying distances. However, the handling of space and the distant view, and the judicious use of varied pigment tones in the miniature "Farmer's young wife elopes with a prince" evoke a greater sense of depth and distance in the scene. This is in contrast to the treatment of the objects executed in bright colour in "Mourning at court" where one finds a limited use of the gradations of the pigments, as a result of which the surface effect is bright and decorative in character, bearing an affinity with the Safavid and Timurid schools of painting. It shows that La'l, in his style, had yet to reconcile the different traits of these schools to discover himself in their unified role at the Mughal studio.

In "Farmer's young wife elopes with a prince", La'l creates a rhythmic effect in his composition by employing receptacles comprising trees and hillocks which divide the picture plane into three units, depicting three main stages of the story: (a) an old man deserted by his wife who eloped with a prince, (b) the woman killed by a lion, and (c) the frightened prince who leaves the woman to her fate and gallops away. The division of the picture plane in two or more units makes the composition complicated, but serves the purpose of providing fuller details of an event or story. It further hints at the skill of La'l in the handling of space and time while he encompasses various actions occurring at different times at different places in one composition.

The lines of text set within the picture frame, a common feature of sixteenth-century manuscript painting, raise an obstacle in the presentation of a panoramic view of the subject (here, remote landscape). But La'l thoughtfully manages the remaining space to give a fuller view of the distant landscape and the aerial perspective without any loss of its charm.

The work of La'l in the *Akbarnama* is representative of the last phase of his career. In this context, a double-page illustration, "Arrest of Shah Abu'l Ma'ali at a feast given by Akbar" (figures 8 and 9) from the Chester Beatty Library MS, stands out for its portrayal of physical reality — a major characteristic of our painter's work. The scene arranged typically in one compositional level, is surcharged with action. The varied gestures and facial expressions not only make the picture lively and detailed, but also make the



7. "Farmer's young
 wife elopes with a prince".
 1596-97. By La'l. *Anwar-i*
Subaili, Bharat Kala
 Bhavan, Varanasi, no. 9069,
 folio 171.

8 and 9. "Arrest of Shah Abu'l Ma'ali at a feast given by Akbar". Circa 1600-05. By La'l. *Akbarnama*, The Chester Beatty Library, Dublin, folios 6b and 7 (double-page illustration).



حاضر شد و بجانب دست راست حضرت ساسان پشت و وقت آن شد که ماین نعمت و سماء افشا که تیر و دو چون شاه
 ابوالمعالی دست پش پش در از کر و تو لک خان قچی که از چاکبک پستان قچی مانو بود و بستاری اقبال تر دشتی کرد و
 پس در آمد و مرد و دست او گرفته دستگیر ساخت



individuals remarkably distinct. One can see in them La'l's mastery in projecting each individual's personality and character. From this point of view, La'l's drawings, though simple, clearly depict the actions of various protagonists in the scene prompting a psychological relationship with the viewer who does not fail to admire the visual drama taking place in the picture. Notably, the theme inscriptions given on the right-hand folio give the details to be followed by the painter in his visual narrative: (1) "[The Emperor] orders grand feast; Shah Abu'l Ma'ali, moving towards right, is seated; food is brought; Shah Abu'l Ma'ali extends his hands to be washed; Tulak Khan Quchi comes from behind and binds both his hands. Two pages to be filled with the theme here recorded". (2) (on one figure, left bottom corner) "To be pictured face to face". (3) (above the figure) "Another standing".¹² In the contemporary court chronicle the event of the arrest of Shah Abu'l Ma'ali is described thus: "It was the time when the festive board was about to be spread, and when he put out his hands to wash them, Tulak Khan Quchi, who was strong and nimble, behaved dexterously, and coming from behind seized both of Shah Abu'l Ma'ali's arms, and made him a prisoner. Others who stood at the foot of the throne came forward to assist. Shah Abu'l Ma'ali became helpless from astonishment, and surrendered."¹³ It would show that the visual narratives corroborate the historical text.

The miniature is finished in the *nim qalam* technique and the objects are finished in thin colour effect with slight shading.

In the Victoria and Albert Museum MS of the *Akbarnama*, where most of the miniatures were "finished" with the collaboration of two or three painters, La'l is the foremost among the lot (that is, Basawan, Kesav, Miskin, Sanwala, and Sarwan), contributing eighteen miniatures. La'l was entrusted only with the work of "drawing". The painters who collaborated with him and did the work of "colouring", are Banwali *Khawurd*, Sanwala, Nand, Ibrahim *Kabar*, Naman, Ramdas, Hari, Khem, Shankar, Kesav *Khawurd*, Premjiu Gujarati, Babu *Naqqash*, and Dhanu. It is to the credit of La'l that although in this *Akbarnama* he has done only the outline drawings of a variety of themes — battle scene, hunting with cheetah, capturing of wild elephants, celebration of marriage, and so on, his versatility is established in the characteristic representation of the human figure enlivened with action, the faithful rendering of animals, the handling of space so as to convey a greater sense of depth, and the psychological relationship established in various parts (units) of the composition, comprising hillocks, trees, a stream, and architectural columns. His compositions, though bustling with action, are yet pervaded by an air of tranquillity. It is due to the ingenuity of La'l that in his action-packed compositions every figure is integrated thoughtfully into the whole to achieve an effect of totality.

The drawing of an elephant depicted in the miniature "Akbar inspects the capture of a wild elephant" (figure 10) reminds us of Ajanta. Here La'l's familiarity with the European technique of modelling is especially noticeable in the representation of the physical features of the animal.

In the above miniature, the animal figure appears to have been depicted with great authenticity, which suggests the artist's keen and direct observation of the event. Interestingly, Persian perspective is used to open up simultaneously the details of the event in vertical progression. Tonal variations, especially in the treatment of the hills and the foreground, suggest distance. The depth introduced in the landscape with the application of darker tones throws the object into relief, which is most likely akin to the art of manuscript illumination of the early sixteenth-century Flemish school.

La'l's two miniatures, "Murder of Sultan Bahadur Shah of Gujarat" and "Humayun's seizure of the fort of Chunar" in the British Library MS of the *Akbarnama* show considerable understanding of Western forms and techniques. In the former example (figure 11), the whole scene is charged with action, depicting the ruler Bahadur Shah of Gujarat struggling in the turbulent waters agitated by the violent movement of the boats coming closer from different directions. The human figures finished with intimate care and

the modelling of the objects with deep shading make the picture realistic. The receding effect in the landscape is marked by the boat and its occupants shown at a distance in diminutive scale, and by the distant water merging with the high horizon line characteristically denoted by the rows of birds in flight — in the typical Mughal manner.

In the other miniature, the composition, though crowded, is managed in a masterly way by our artist who creates drama through a variety of gestures of hand and lively facial expressions, and thus makes all the figures actively engaged with and related to one another. The three-dimensional drawing of the fort, clearly an improvement on the flat depiction of buildings in Persian paintings, adds realism to the scene. The gradually receding landscape, comprising massed clumps of trees, groups of buildings, and a fleet of boats in the distant background, reminding one of the European technique of creating spatial depth, seem to have become a constant feature of La'i's style. In its most pronounced form it appears in La'i's painting "Woman complains to the Saljuq king Sanjar" in the *Khamsa* of Nizami (British Library, Or. 12208, folio 15). It shows a receding landscape, exhibiting a vast panoramic view of buildings, trees, and mounds of earth, denoting a harmonious blending of man and nature.¹⁴ In another instance, La'i's miniature "Dara and herdsmen" (circa 1604) seen in the *Kulliyat* of Sa'di (Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan Collection, Geneva) suggests that though the ideal of Timurid art always held a vital place in Mughal painting, the objects received new life under European impact with an

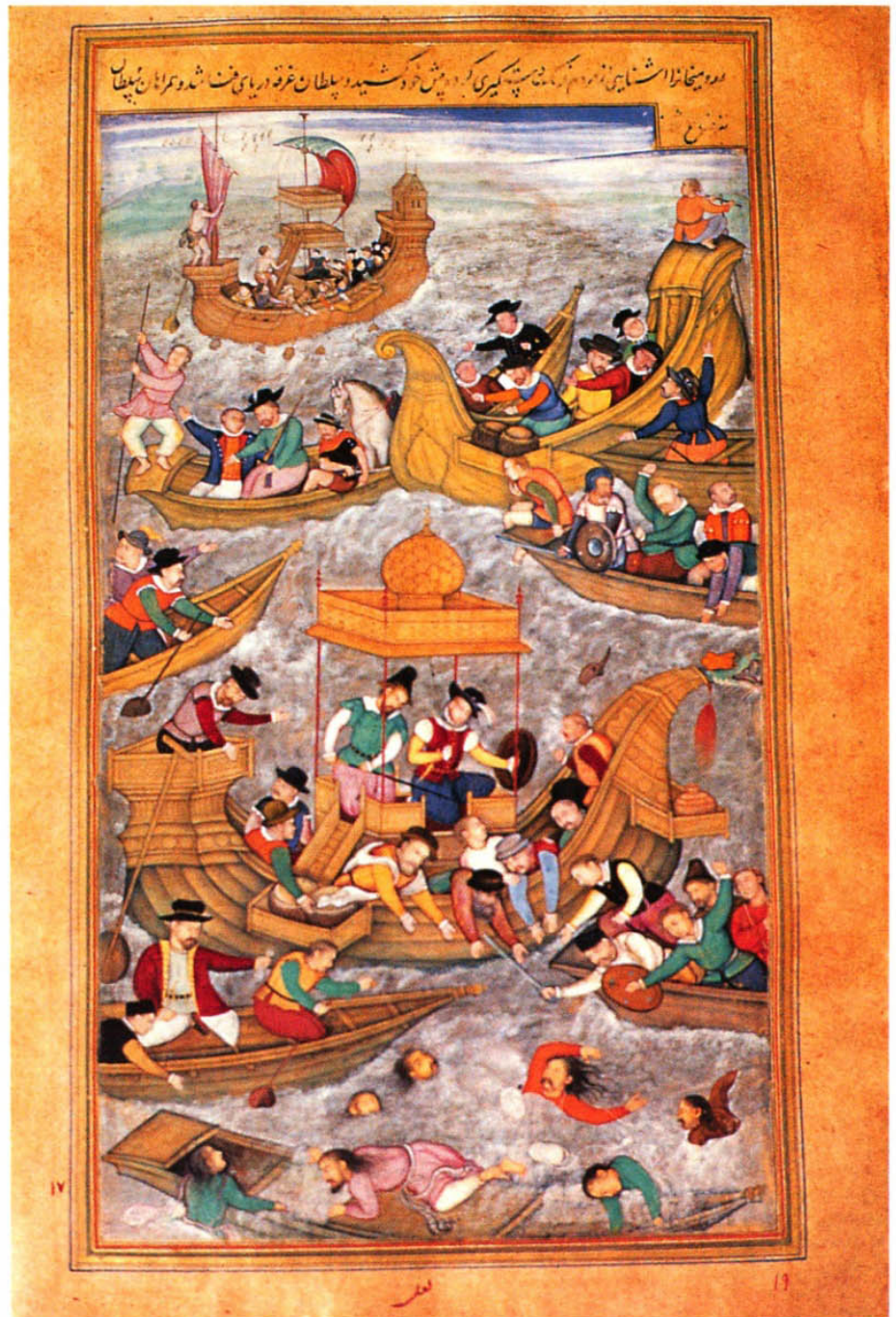


10. "Akbar inspects the capture of a wild elephant". Circa 1600-05. Drawn by La'i and painted by Sanwala. *Akbarnama*, Victoria and Albert Museum, London, I.S. 2-1896, no. 117, pl. 39. Courtesy of the Trustees of the V&A.

adaptation of the chiaroscuro technique to depict fuller mass and volume *in* the treatment of figures, and true perspective to create an illusion of space and depth *in* painting.¹⁵

La'l's painting "An old man reading a book, seated in a gold landscape" (circa 1590-1600) (figure 12) varies in colour tones and technique.¹⁶ Thin colour in golden tones laid in the objects in thin washes of pigments are the salient features of this technique. Thin shading and the linear details, especially in the treatment of garments, further distinguish it. This technique later received the attention of the artists of Jahangir's court who freely used it to depict figures in landscapes and mainly in marginal painting.¹⁷

It is the ingenuity of La'l that has successfully captured the moments of strain reflected in the face of the old man reading a book. The background comprising a solitary tree with thin foliage and birds perched on it suggests the vertical perspective; on the other hand, the distant landscape denoted by trees growing on a mound of earth imparts spatial depth to the scene. The spread of the branches of the tree and the flight of birds



11. "Murder of Sultan Bahadur Shah of Gujarat". Circa 1602-05. By La'l. *Akbarnama*, British Library, London, Or. 12988, folio 66a.

12. "An old man reading a book, seated in a gold landscape". Circa 1590-1600. Painted by La'l. Musee Guimet, Paris, no. 3619.Ic.



signify the movement from right to left which corresponds with the leaning figure of the old man. And, thus, the background does not remain isolated.

La'l also imitated and incorporated Western figures in his compositions. The miniature "Two European ladies in landscape" (circa 1600-05), ascribed to him, is a rare example of this (figure 13). In the ascription on the painting, our artist's name has the epithet "*Ustad*" (Master).¹⁸ *Ustad* was an honorific title usually suffixed to the name of master artists. Besides La'l, Basawan, Mansur, and Miskin are painters whose names appear with this title on some of the miniatures executed by them. The use of this epithet with the painter's name is itself a testimony of his recognition at the Mughal atelier.

In the present picture, the female figures have been directly derived from European sources. However, they are shown in the usual Mughal landscape marked by sparsely growing clumps of trees, greatly diminished remote landscape, and a stream in the

13. "Two European ladies in landscape". Circa 1600-05. By *Ustad La'l*. Royal Library, Windsor Castle, no. B20, folio 3a. The Royal Collection © Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II.



foreground. In the distant sky, one sees rows of flying birds in high margin in the Mughal mode to suggest aerial perspective. Besides, the treatment of space and the receding effect in landscape is typically Mughal, also seen in other works of La'l. The rendering of rhythmic folds in the treatment of garments and the careful modelling of the figures testify to La'l's thorough understanding of the European techniques of painting. In fact, these figures remind us of the European theme, "Madonna by the tree", but without the infant Jesus. In another instance, an almost identical female figure shown seated on an ornate throne of the type close to the Savonarola is described by Welch akin to the style of Jacopo Francia of Bologna, who was active during 1486-1546.¹⁹

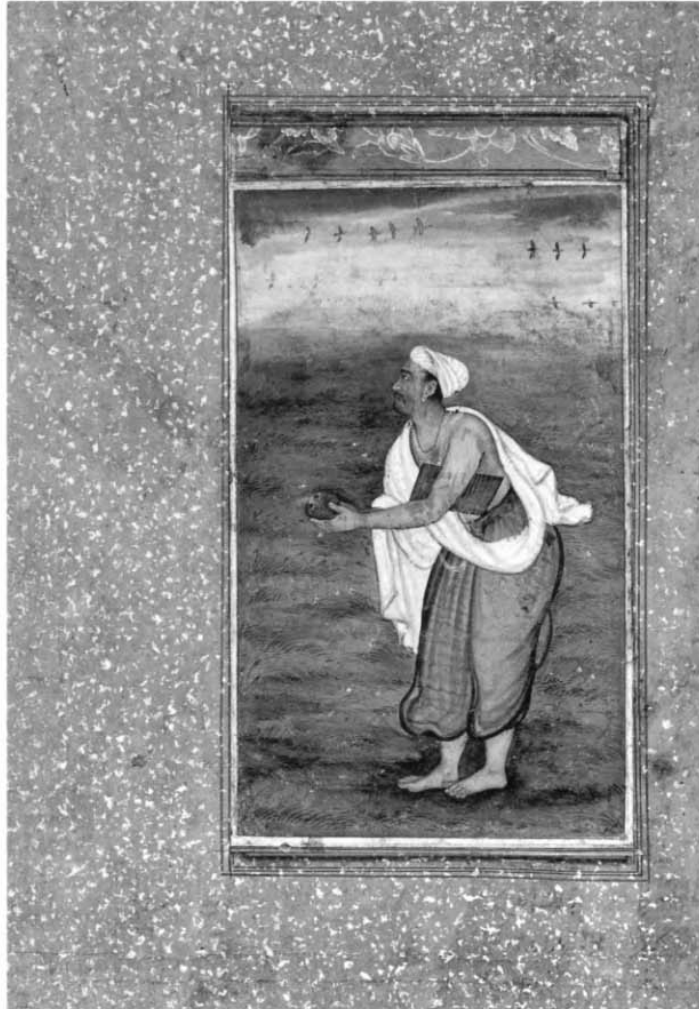
Two other paintings, "Three ladies reading" and "Lady with a child" (both circa 1600), the latter described as a possible work of La'l, noticed by Grube in the Hans P. Kraus Collection, further invite our attention since both these miniatures represent similar European female figures.²⁰ Grube observes that the drawing is totally in European style, after the Dutch and German engravings brought to India by the Jesuits at the end of the sixteenth century. However, on grounds of style and similarities in the depiction of the female figures, all the above four miniatures may be classed as a group of Mughal miniatures adapted from the European engravings belonging to the Flemish school. It is notable that at Akbar's atelier, besides the imitation of European engravings/pictures, their adaptation and incorporation begin to form part of Mughal painters' original compositions, and this trend continued in the Mughal school till the late seventeenth century.

La'l's work in general, then, is marked for the interaction between the human figures imbued with emotions and feelings denoted by gentle rhythmic movements and impressive facial expressions, and the lively and realistic depiction of animals. His background landscapes, greatly influenced by European art, are representative of the Mughal manner of executing a receding effect, creating an illusion of distance in a scene. It is remarkable that all the units or groups in the composition of his visual narratives, though self-contained, are closely integrated with a firm feeling of psychological bonding between them. This quality of La'l's art further imparts a sense of rhythmic visual activity throughout the composition. His paintings bear testimony to a rich palette, harmonious blending of colours, and immaculate manner of modelling physical features in accordance with the European technique of creating the effect of mass and volume. It is to his credit that though his figures appear simple and direct, they exhibit precise details in a naturalistic manner. In contrast to this, the hillocks which dominate landscape backgrounds in some of his paintings clearly demonstrate affinity with their stylized representation in Persian painting.

La'l's works signify a unified and distinctive style which is the result of a full-fledged combination of active traditions of Indian, Persian (Safavid and Timurid), and European art. He was a trendsetter in establishing the modes of Mughal narrative art in which various genres were brought together.

Notes

1. Abu'l Fazl, *A'in-i Akbari* (1595), ed. H. Blochmann (Calcutta 1867-77), vol. 1, p. 117; tr. H. Blochmann (Calcutta 1868), vol. 1, p. 114.
2. Som Prakash Verma, *Mughal Painters and Their Work, A Biographical Survey and Comprehensive Catalogue* (New Delhi 1994), pp. 221-31.
3. Abu'l Fazl, op. cit.
4. Reproduced: T.H. Hendley, *Memorials of the Jeypore Exhibition. Vol. 4. The Razmnama. MS.* (Jaipur 1884), plates 4-5, 8, 16, 23, 35, 41, 46, 51-52, 55, 66, 75, 77, 79, 82-83, 87, 89, 93, 109-11, 114, 116, 119, 123, 125, and 144.
5. See Geeti Sen, *Paintings from the Akbarnama* (New Delhi 1984), plates 65-67.
6. For a reproduction, see Milo C. Beach, *Early Mughal Painting* (London 1987), p. 23, fig. 10.
7. Asok K. Das, "An Introductory Note on the Emperor Akbar's *Ramayana* and its Miniatures", in Robert Skelton, Andrew Topsfield, Susan Stronge, and Rosemary Crill, eds., *Facets of Indian Art* (London 1987), p. 99, figs. 5 and 10.
8. B.W. Robinson, ed., *Islamic Painting and the Arts of the Book* (London 1976), p. 239, plate 110.
9. Ibid., p. 241, plate 112.
10. S.P. Verma, "Aspects of Paintings in the British Museum Manuscript of the *Akbarnama*", *Lalit Kala*, no. 27 (New Delhi 1993), p. 25.
11. For reproductions, see J. Marek and H. Knizkova, *The Chenghis Khan Miniatures from the Court of Akbar the Great* (London 1963), plates 2, 4, 7, 9, 11-13, 16, 18-19.
12. For the rendering of these inscriptions I am grateful to my senior colleague Professor Irfan Habib, Coordinator, Centre of Advanced Study, Department of History, Aligarh Muslim University.
13. Abu'l Fazl, *Akbarnama* (1601), ed. Ahmed Ali and Abdur Rahim (Calcutta 1873-87), vol. 2, p. 16, tr. H. Beveridge (Calcutta 1897-1921), vol. 2, pp. 28-29.
14. Basil Gray, ed., *The Arts of India* (London 1981), p. 134, fig. 146.
15. Beach, op. cit., pp. 128-31, fig. 89.
16. The miniature is in the Musée Guimet, Paris. I am thankful to Ms Amina Okada for very kindly making available to me a colour slide of this painting. Also see her *Miniatures de l'Inde impériale. Les peintres de la cour d'Akbar (1556-1605)* (Paris 1989), pp. 164-65, no. 44.
17. Esin Atil, *The Brush of the Masters from Iran and India* (Washington, DC 1978), p. 106, no. 63, pp. 110-11, no. 65.
18. Also see figure 6.
19. S.C. Welch, "Mughal and Deccani Miniature Paintings from a Private Collection", *Ars Orientalis*, 5, (Washington, DC 1963), p. 226, fig. 10.
20. Ernst J. Grube, *Islamic Paintings from the 11th to 18th Century in the Collection of Hans P. Kraus* (New York, no date), nos. 23+35.



Kesu Das: The Impact of Western Art on Mughal Painting

Amina Okada

Kesu Das is one of the few Mughal painters — like Manohar, Abu'l Hasan, Bishan Das, Daulat, Govardhan,¹ and Balchand — whose features are known to us and, what is more, at two different periods of his life. A self-portrait (figure 1), probably painted in the 1570s, shows him as a young man, holding a coconut in his hands, a drawing board — the instrument of his art — tucked under his left arm. Painted much later, a second self-portrait, dated 1589 (Samvat 1646), shows the artist as an old man, holding in his hand a scroll of petition to his patron, the Emperor Akbar.² In both these portraits, although they show him at different ages, Kesu Das is presented in the same posture, leaning slightly forward in an attitude which is strangely imbued with simplicity and modesty.

And yet Kesu Das was among the great painters in the workshop of the Emperor Akbar (r. 1556-1605). On the list of the seventeen best painters drawn up by the historian Abu'l Fazl,³ who was the Emperor's biographer, Kesu Das is ranked fifth in his esteem, right after Mir Sayyid 'Ali, Abd us-Samad, Daswanth, and Basawan. Nonetheless, as with most Mughal painters, we know virtually nothing about the life of this artist who was renowned in imperial circles in his day. Only his features have miraculously come down to us. His Hindu origins are indicated by his name — given variously as Kesu Das, Keshava Das, or Kesu Kalan (Kesu the Elder)⁴ and by the sacred thread (*yajnopavita*) which can be seen on his chest in the earlier self-portrait (see figure 1). He contributed several illustrations to some well-known Akbari manuscripts and also produced some individual miniatures, often signed. Naturally, those miniatures are often more personal and more polished than the illustrations done in conjunction with other artists, as was the custom in Akbar's workshop. Consequently, the miniatures shed more light on the style of Kesu Das and reveal some of his favourite motifs.

M.C. Beach was the first to devote a lengthy study⁵ to the work of Kesu Das. He listed various Akbari manuscripts in whose illustration Kesu Das took part, generally as an artist in charge of the overall composition and design (*tarkh*), sometimes as portraitist. They include the *Darab-nama* (about 1580-85, British Library, London), the *Razm-nama* (about 1582-86, Maharaja Sawai Man Singh II Museum, Jaipur), the *Timur-nama* (about 1584, Khuda Bakhsh Public Library, Patna), the *Ramayana* (dated 1589, Maharaja Sawai Man Singh II Museum, Jaipur), the *Harivamsa* (about 1586, dispersed), the *Khamsa* of Nizami (about 1585, Keir Collection), the *Akbar-nama* (about 1590, Victoria and Albert Museum, London), the *Baharistan* of Jami' (dated 1595, Bodleian Library, Oxford), the *Diwan* of Shahi (about 1595, private collection), and the *Jami' ut-Tawarikh* (dated 1596, Imperial Library, Tehran).⁶ Where some of these manuscripts are concerned, his contribution was especially important. Along with the painter Lal, for instance, Kesu Das was one of the principal illustrators of the *Ramayana* of Jaipur, since 36 of the 176 illustrations that make up the manuscript bear his name.⁷

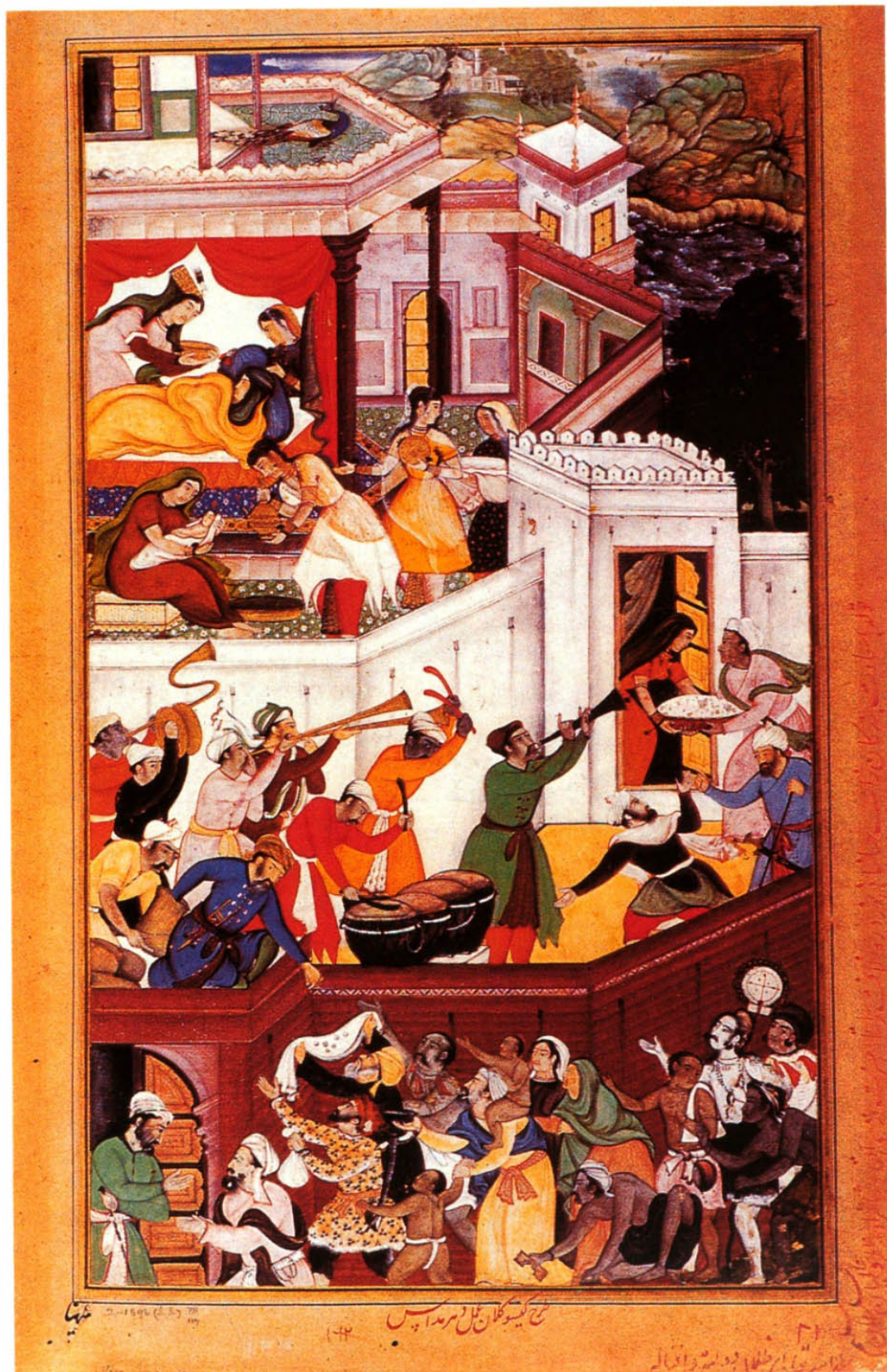
If we examine these illustrations done for the great imperial manuscripts, we can discern some of Kesu Das's stylistic features. Let us look at a page from the *Akbar-nama*, "News of Salim's birth being brought to Akbar" (figure 2). The figure standing before the monarch and holding a document may be the astrologer in charge of establishing the newborn prince's horoscope. Both his gesture and his posture remind us of the self-portrait of the elderly Kesu Das, in which the painter brandishes in a similar way a petition addressed to the monarch. In both works, moreover, the text of the missive is written, surprisingly, in Devanagari and not in Persian, even though Persian was the official and administrative language of the Mughal empire. In another illustration from the same manuscript, "Rejoicings on the birth of Prince Salim at Fathpur" (figure 3), the position of one of the midwives, holding the newborn prince in her arms, almost makes us think of a Madonna and Child,⁸ based on one of the European prints which the painters in Akbar's workshop had every opportunity to study and adapt. A probable European influence is still more obvious in an illustration from the *Darab-nama* (figure 4), where Kesu Das shows a man killing children by tearing them apart. The

1. Self-portrait. Signed Kesu. Circa 1570. Williams College Museum of Art, Williamstown, Mass. Museum Purchase 81.44.

2. "News of Salim's birth being brought to Akbar". Designed by Kesu Kalan, painted by Chitra. From an imperial copy of the *Akbar-nama*. Circa 1590. Victoria and Albert Museum, London, I.S.2/1896, Acc. No. 79/117. Courtesy of the Trustees of the V&A.



3. "Rejoicings on the birth of Prince Salim at Fathpur". Designed by Kesu Kalan, painted by Dharm Das. From an imperial copy of the *Akbar-nama*. Circa 1590. Victoria and Albert Museum, London, I.S.2/1896, Acc. No. 78/117. Courtesy of the Trustees of the V&A.



4. Page from a *Darab-nama* manuscript. By Kesu Kalan. Circa 1580-85. British Library, London, Ms. Or. 4615.



realistic treatment of the murderer's anatomy, with distinct, bulging muscles and subtle modelling, clearly shows that the painter was familiar with Western models and European prints.

As we know, Kesu Das's art was influenced by the European prints — especially Flemish and German — which were then circulating at the Mughal court, brought by Jesuit missionaries. Several of the Akbari painters, including Basawan and his son Manohar, produced works based more or less faithfully on those of European artists. Judging from the few paintings signed by Kesu Das or attributed to him with some certainty, it would appear that he did not amalgamate different European sources, as Basawan sometimes did, or adapt more or less freely the European works he was able to see. Instead, Kesu Das reproduced them relatively faithfully, although he often reinterpreted the faces shown in the original or the expressions on them. We need only look at one of his best-known and most polished works, "Saint Matthew the Evangelist" (figure 5), scrupulously adapted from an engraving by Philip Galle based on a work by Martin van Heemskerck.⁹ Only the background of the composition has been developed, compared with the Galle engraving; the Mughal artist has also recomposed the decor, enriching it with personal notes: beds of flowers, lotuses in full bloom, and various receptacles including a ewer, on which the artist's name appears, along with the date: AH 996 (1587-88).



5. "Saint Matthew the Evangelist". Signed Kesu Das. Dated 1587-88. Bodleian Library, Oxford. Ms. Douce Or. A1, fol. 41v.

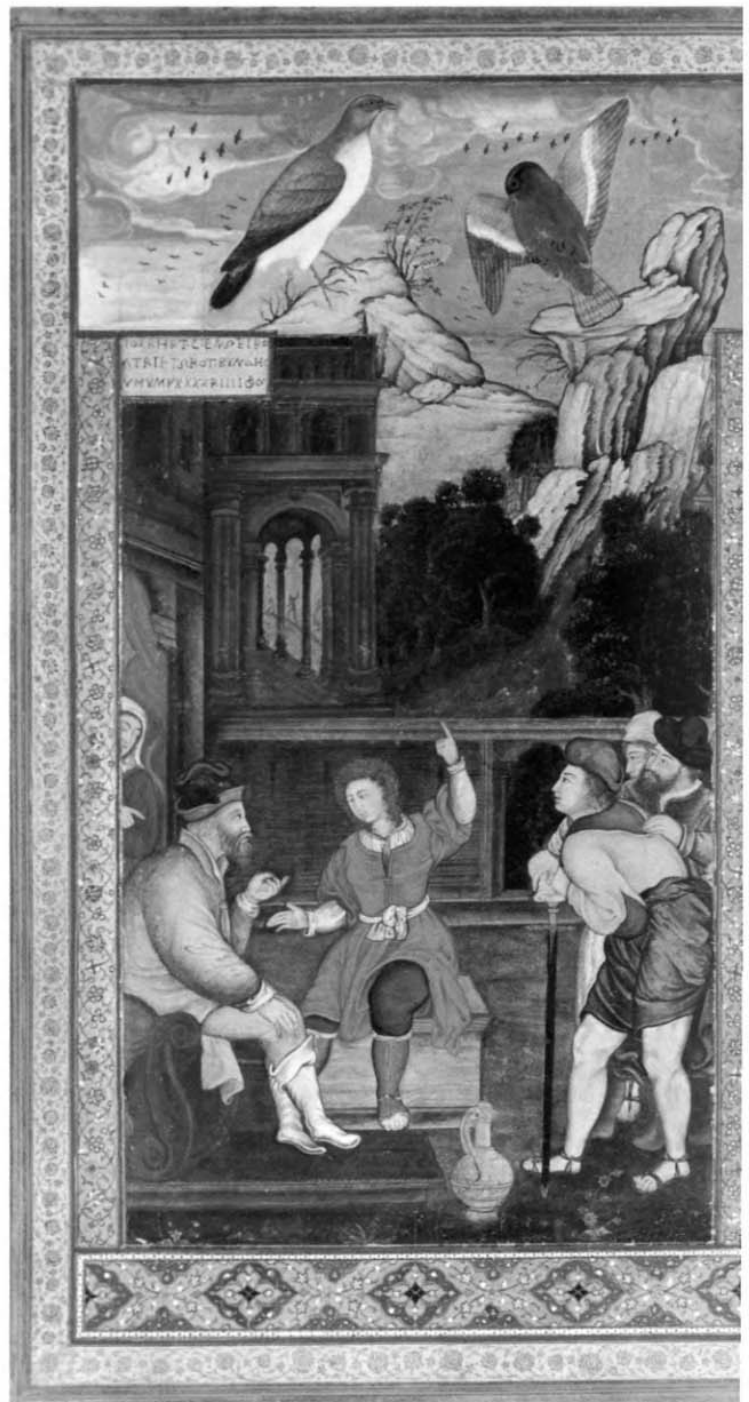


6. "Joseph telling his dream to his father". Signed Kesu Das. Circa 1580-85. The Chester Beatty Library, Dublin, Ms. 41, no. 2. Reproduced by kind permission of the Trustees of the Chester Beatty Library.



7. "Roman hero". Attributed to Kesu Das. Circa 1585-90. Printroom, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, RP-T-1993-33.

8. "Joseph telling his dream to his father".
 Attributed to Kesu Das.
 Circa 1585-90. The St Louis
 Art Museum, Gift of
 J. Lionburger Davis, 403.52.

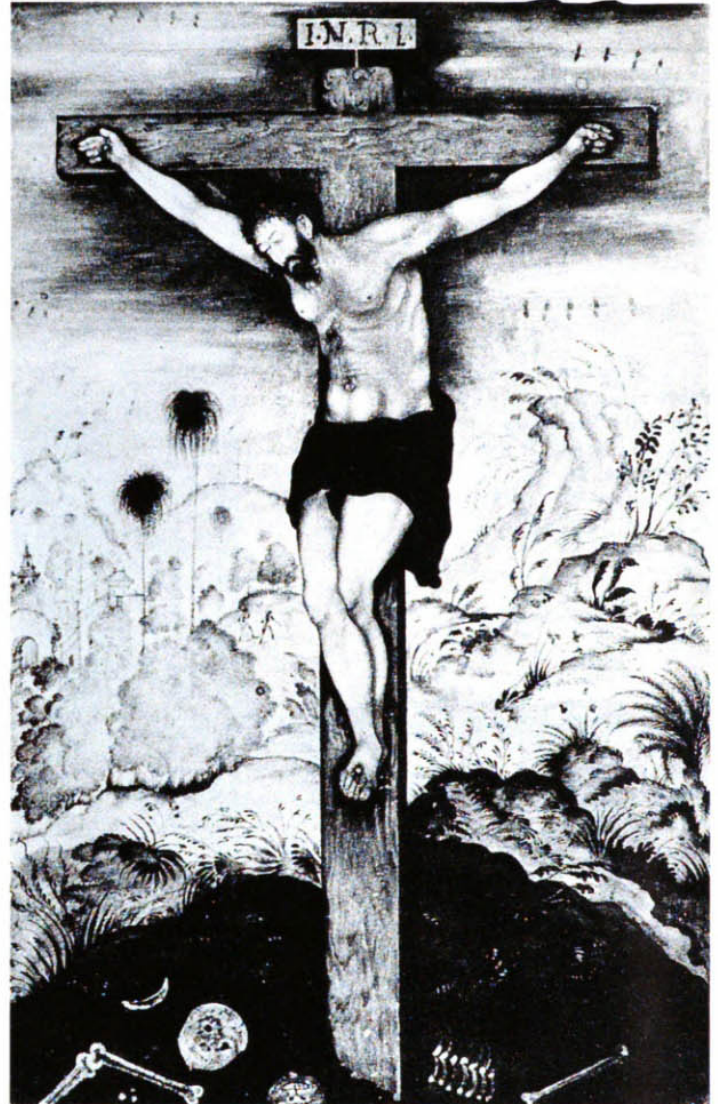


Another adaptation is equally faithful to the original: "Joseph telling father" (figure 6), copied from an anonymous print done after Georg Per Kesu Das has scrupulously recreated the figures' attitudes and costumes, recomposing the background and the decor, making them more ample and elaborate than in the original. A veritable landscape of woods and rocks. As in "Saint Matthew the Evangelist" (see figure 5), a ewer¹¹ appears in the foreground, adding a discreetly personal note to compositions that were carefully copied from European models.

Occasionally, however, Kesu Das took inspiration from several sources to produce a single composition. This was the case with a recently discovered painting attributed to him,¹² the "Roman hero" (figure 7). It is derived from two European models depicting two Roman figures, Muscius Scaevola and Tit



9. "Saint Jerome".
Signed Kesu Das. Circa
1580-85. Musée Guimet,
Paris, MA 2476.



10. "Christ on the
Cross". Attributed to Kesu
Das. Circa 1590. Gulistan
Palace Library, Tehran.

It appears that Kesu Das would sometimes produce several variants of one and the same work. For instance, he made two very similar versions of "Joseph telling his dream to his father". One of them, signed, is in the Chester Beatty Library in Dublin (see figure 6); the second, attributed to Kesu Das, is in the St Louis Art Museum (figure 8). Likewise, he left two Mughal versions of an unidentified European print of "Saint Jerome"; one of these, signed and dated approximately 1580, is in the Musée Guimet in Paris (figure 9) while the second, of a later date, is in a private collection.¹³ In both of these versions we can see some of the stylistic features characteristic of Kesu Das that we noted earlier in connection with the *Darab-nama* (see figure 4): the modelling and the care with which the anatomy and muscles of the figures are conceived. The same concern with anatomical verisimilitude also appears both in the martyred body of "Christ on the Cross" (figure 10), which Beach attributes to Kesu Das, now in Tehran, at the Imperial Library, Gulistan Palace,¹⁴ and in "Roman hero" (see figure 7) in the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam.

In these compositions based on European works or adapted from them, Kesu Das generally does not give free rein to his fancy, except with regard to the decor and the background. There, bold and elaborate architectural elements replace the conciseness of the original setting and are accompanied by lush, dense vegetation. For Kesu Das was not only a clever portraitist and a skilled adapter of European works; he also excelled in presenting landscapes, hazy distant scenes, and vegetation rendered in dark strokes lightened with yellow. Many of his scenes, whether conceived in the purest Mughal

tradition (figure 11) or copied from European sources (see figures 5 and 9), are enriched by cleverly composed landscapes, sometimes vanishing into a vaporous distance. Indeed, the bluish, ethereal mists into which the backgrounds melt away are one of Kesu Das's cherished stylistic effects. At the same time, they reveal his knowledge of the effects of perspective.

These two traits — the special care lavished on vegetation and the introduction of architecture as a component of the background — lead us to attribute to Kesu Das a miniature to be found in the Musée Guimet; it is based on an unidentified European work which may depict the "Presentation of Jesus at the Temple" (figure 12). In addition to the setting and decor of the scene, the physiognomy of the figures — markedly oval faces with long noses and an emphasis on modelling — would seem to be the work of Kesu Das. Moreover, there are two striking resemblances: first between the face of the old man embracing a youth (on the left) and that of the "Saint Jerome" (see figure 9) in the Musée Guimet, and the resemblance between the face of the same youth, shown in profile, and the face of the figure leaning on his sword in "Joseph telling his dream to his father" (on the right) (see figures 6 and 8).

When Kesu Das signed his works — often on a ewer or a vase (see figure 5), on an architectural feature, or near the knotty trunk of a tree (see figure 9) — he signed as Kesu



11. "Elephant and rider". Signed Kesu Das. Circa 1585. Verburgt Bequest to the Society of the Friends of Asiatic Art on loan to the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, AK-Mak-521.



12. "Presentation of Jesus at the Temple"(?).
Attributed to Kesu Das.
Circa 1580-85. Musée
Guimet, Paris, MA 2475.

or Kesu Das. The name Kesu Kalan (the Elder), which appears chiefly among the notations in the margins of the Akbari manuscripts (see figure 4), was sometimes adopted by the imperial scribes (*munshi*), probably for the sole purpose of distinguishing between the works of Kesu Das and those of his homonym, Kesu Khurd (the Younger) or Kesu Gujarati.¹⁵ Aside from those manuscript illustrations bearing such notations, fewer than ten individual miniatures bearing the signature of Kesu Das are known today.¹⁶

His second self-portrait, dated 1589, shows an elderly and weakened man, and it appears that Kesu Das ceased to paint some time after the 1590s. He was responsible for only two illustrations in the *Jami' ut-Tawarikh* (dated 1596) and his activity may have come to an end after that date. Receptive to the aesthetic contributions of the Western world, his work was highly instrumental in breathing new life into Mughal pictorial art. In adapting European artists' works, Kesu Das may have been less bold and less personal than his fellow painter, Basawan, but the genuine technical mastery evident in his style fully justifies the esteem in which he was held by the Emperor Akbar and his biographer Abu'l Fazl, who ranked him fifth among the greatest painters of the imperial workshop.

Notes

1. Y. Godard, "Les marges du Murakka' Gulshan", *Athar-e Iran*, vol. I, 1936, pp. 11-33.
2. Reproduced in M.C. Beach, "The Mughal Painter Kesu Das", *Archives of Asian Art*, XXX, 1976-77, p. 50, fig. 17.
3. Abu'l Fazl 'Allami, *A'in-i Akbari*, tr. H. Blochmann (Calcutta 1938-39), p. 114.
4. In his study of Kesu Das, Beach notes the stylistic differences between the works of Kesu Das and those of Kesu Khurd (the Younger) or Kesu Gujarati (Beach, op. cit., pp. 34-52).
5. Ibid.
6. M.C. Beach, *The Imperial Image: Paintings for the Mughal Court* (Washington, DC 1981), pp. 100-01.
7. A.K. Das, "Akbar's Imperial Ramayana, A Mughal Persian Manuscript", *Marg*, vol. XLV, no. 3, 1994, p. 62.
8. Cf. "Virgin and Child", signed Kesu Das, Staatsbibliothek, Berlin. See A. Okada, *Le Grand Moghol et ses peintres, Miniaturistes de l'Inde aux XVIème et XVIIème siècles* (Paris 1992), p. 102, no. 108.
9. Beach, op. cit., 1976-77, p. 35, fig. 2.
10. Ibid., p. 42, fig. 11.
11. A ewer (or some other analogous vessel) often appears in the foreground of Kesu Das's compositions. See Okada, op. cit., p. 99 (no. 104), p. 102 (nos. 107-08), p. 103 (nos. 110-11); and Beach, op. cit., 1976-77, p. 37, fig. 3. Sometimes, in fact, it is on this ewer that the painter's signature appears.
12. See *Art Islamique*, Drouot-Richelieu, 7 avril 1993, pp. 32-33, no. 81. (We wish to express our special gratitude to Dr Pauline Scheurleer, Curator at the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam, for having drawn our attention to this recent acquisition by the Rijksmuseum.)
13. Beach, op. cit., 1976-77, p. 39, fig. 8. The "Saint Jerome" by Kesu Das, or the European print on which it was based, seems to have given rise, in the seventeenth century, to certain Mughal miniatures which show a young prince kneeling before a holy man whose features and posture are those of Kesu Das's "Saint Jerome" (see *Sotheby's*, May 4, 1977, lot 316, and *Sotheby's*, April 24, 1979, lot 19).
14. See also an illustration from the *Razm-nama* of Jaipur (circa 1582-86) depicting wrestlers; cf. Beach, op. cit., 1976-77, p. 48, fig. 16.
15. Ibid., p. 49.
16. J. Soustiel and M.C. David, *Miniatures orientales de l'Inde* (Paris 1986), p. 10.

Farrukh Beg occupies a key position in the development of the Mughal style. At a time when Akbar's *taswirkhana* was set to evolve a unified style, he reinfused Persianate elements and norms to give it a more variegated character. Belonging to the Kalmuk clan of Central Asian Turks, Farrukh Beg arrived at Akbar's court from Kabul in December 1585 after the death of his patron, Akbar's half-brother Mirza Muhammad Hakim.¹ He seems to have enjoyed a good position in Akbar's *taswirkhana* as he is the only painter, besides Daswant, noticed by Abu'l Fazl both in his biographical work, *Akbarnama*, and encyclopedic treatise, *A'in-i Akbari*. He continued to work for Jahangir and earned a substantial reward of two thousand rupees from him as noted in the *Tuzuk-i Jahangiri*.²

Nothing is known about the early days of this talented painter. Judging from his works in different Akbar-period manuscripts and individual studies of adorable youths and venerable saints mounted in Jahangiri albums, it is clear that he was fully conversant with the works of past and contemporary Safavid and Khurasani masters. In Mirza Muhammad Hakim's *taswirkhana* he worked with another highly rated painter, Farrukh Husayn. Badri Atabai writes about a picture of Mirza Muhammad Hakim and his eunuch counsellor Hajji Yaqut drawn by Farrukh Husayn in AH 992 in the Shar-ara Bagh at Kabul mounted on a folio of the *Gulshan Muraqqa'*. Of its style nothing is known, as it was not illustrated.³

Farrukh Beg's first assignment in Akbar's *taswirkhana* was to embellish an early sixteenth-century Persian manuscript of the *Khamsa* of Nizami. He composed as many as seven out of its thirty-six miniatures.⁴ The first two were also finished by him while the rest were completed by three younger artists: Dharamdas (ff. 198b, 205a), Dhanraj (f. 203a), and Bihzad (the younger son of Khwaja 'Abd us-Samad whose name was rubbed out at a later date) (ff. 209a, 249b). The paintings should be dated between 1586 and 1588, as Muhammad Sharif, the elder son of the Khwaja, was associated with this project. (The only other manuscript in which Sharif was involved is the imperial *Razmnama* completed in 1586, while he did not work on the *Ramayana* completed three years later.)

Farrukh Beg's compositions display his close familiarity with the miniatures of the *Haft Awrang* of Jami prepared for Sultan Ibrahim Mirza, nephew of the Persian emperor Shah Tahmasp, painted between 1556 and 1565, and those of the *Diwan* of Mir 'Ali Shir Nawa'i completed fifty years earlier.⁵ He, unlike his contemporaries in Prince Salim's *taswirkhana*, Aqa Riza, Abu'l Hasan, and Bishandas, did not draw replicas but used various compositional details and stock motifs of these works in his own inimitable way. The process of Mughalization is more apparent in the remaining joint works, which was perhaps not to his liking as all his other works found so far are single images composed and finished unassisted.

The next manuscript on which he worked is the presentation copy of the *Baburnama* prepared circa 1590, now dispersed with a large section in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London. Three of its miniatures collected by Henry Vever in 1912 are now in the Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Washington, DC.⁶ The best known and the finest among these is the elaborate and well-finished scene of Babur receiving an unidentified courtier. The luxuriously patterned architectural backdrop, the golden sky, intricately designed carpets and throne, the pool and water-courses and glimpses of the garden with his "trademark" *chanar* and cypress trees remind us of the works of Aqa Mirak in the *Khamsa* of Nizami prepared for Shah Tahmasp. The young attendants, standard and stirrup-bearers, and old bearded courtiers, are, however, his own creations, crystallized through years of practice. Though these works display a wonderful sense of maturity and control, they stand apart as a group differing from the creations of other Mughal masters.

This tendency is best exemplified in the well-known scene of Akbar's entry into Surat in the second volume of the *Akbarnama* now in the Victoria and Albert Museum (figure 2). The composition is based on a mirror-reverse version of the miniature, "The aziz and Zulaykha enter the capital of Misr and the Egyptians come out to greet them", in the copy of the *Haft Awrang* of Jami attributed to Shaykh Muhammad.⁷ While most of the

1. Self-portrait of Farrukh Beg. Inscribed by Shah Jahan on the mount, "painting of and by Farrukh Beg". Formerly in the Ardeshir Collection. Present whereabouts unknown.



2. "Akbar's entry into Surat". By Farrukh Beg. From the *Akbarnama*, Victoria and Albert Museum, London, No. IS. 2-1896.117/117. Courtesy of the Trustees of the V&A.



3. "Meeting of Mir Mu'izz ul-Mulk and the Afghan rebel Bahadur Khan". By Farrukh Beg. Victoria and Albert Museum, London, No. I.S. 2-1896.96/117. Courtesy of the Trustees of the V&A.

illustrations of the *Akbarnama* faithfully recreate the original setting and the dramatis personae connected with the episode, this one displays a marked departure. The fort, the outcrop of hills, and vegetation do not in any manner conform to the original venue of Surat. Even the figure of Akbar and those of his followers in the campaign hardly resemble the people faithfully portrayed in other miniatures of this series. The concern for intricate architectural embellishment and the variety of human faces and expressions are as pronounced as those of Shaykh Muhammad. Some of the figural types and vegetation shown in this miniature recur often in Farrukh Beg's works.

The other miniature painted by Farrukh Beg in the *Akbarnama*, the scene of the meeting of Mir Mu'izz ul-Mulk and the Afghan rebel Bahadur Khan (figure 3), also displays passages from Safavid masterpieces in the *Khamsa* of Nizami and *Haft Awrang* of Jami. The colour scheme, like that of the work discussed above, is very different from the rest of the series, and the figures neatly drawn but impassive and listless. The *chanar* tree with its chalky trunk, twisted branches, and sparse multicoloured leaves is again used here as an important element of the composition to create a visual balance and harmony. The figures of Bahadur Khan and his companion Sikandar Khan wearing an orange *jama* instantly remind us of the striking composition of four saints in a landscape in the St Petersburg album.⁸ The young scarf-wielding attendant and the ewer-bearer resemble other young attendants found in many of his works.

The miniature showing a young prince engrossed in music and poetry in an outdoor assembly in the pocket-size *Diwan* of Hafiz (in Rampur's Raza Library) is perfectly in Farrukh Beg's style, though it does not bear any contemporary attribution.⁹ The composition occupying the middle portion of the folio is also based on a miniature like "The infant witness testifies to Yusuf's innocence" of the *Haft Awrang* (f. 120) attributed to Shaykh Muhammad.¹⁰ It shows again the old *chanar* tree with its entwining branches through the half-opened doorway, craggy hills, and stylized trees against a golden sky. Young beardless attendants, old grey-bearded poets, and musicians are noticed in his other compositions. The figures are again neatly drawn but hardly evoke any emotion or feeling. The poet sitting facing the prince bears a striking similarity to the old mullah standing alone in a landscape in the Khuda Bakhsh Library, Patna, discussed below (see figure 13).

Skelton attributed the remarkable miniature of a ruler holding court under a canopy in a hilly landscape mounted on a Jahangir Album folio formerly in the Otto Sohn-Rethel collection, Dusseldorf¹¹ to Farrukh Beg. The ruler appears to be Timur surrounded by a crowd of courtiers and people from such different parts of the world as Persia, India, China, Central Asia, and Europe. Farrukh Beg with his penchant for painting diverse ethnic types and expressions fully utilized the opportunity and painted a variety of figures, many already seen in his earlier works. The ubiquitous *chanar* tree, cypresses, bushy trees, craggy hills, and a colourful and intricately designed canopy are all present in this miniature, giving weight to Skelton's attribution.

Milo Beach recently published two more delicately ornamented Jahangir Album folios containing two miniatures apparently from the same manuscript which may be the *Jami' ut-Tawarikh* completed in 1596.¹² These miniatures, showing Timur in the battlefield and Timur setting forth on a military expedition contain many details rarely met with in contemporary Mughal paintings. Beach recognized the hand of a master artist in their designing while the finishing was done by others, and identified the master artist only as a close follower of Dust Muhammad. John Seyller in his latest survey on Farrukh Beg has attributed these to him.¹³ However, the tree and the hills, especially in the painting showing Timur leading his expedition, are not the "trademark" trees and hills of Farrukh Beg. In the other work some of the old bearded courtiers resemble Farrukh Beg's character-types but other parts of the crowded compositions do not show traits of Farrukh Beg's style.

The activities of the imperial *taswirkhana* slowed down considerably during the last five years of Akbar's reign, while a small group of painters under the direction of Aqa Riza

was busy preparing albums and selected illustrated manuscripts for Prince Salim at Allahabad. The surviving leaves of these albums contain a large and almost bewildering variety of materials — early Mughal works, Persian masterpieces, European engravings, portraits, and calligraphic specimens treasured by Salim. To embellish the wide margins of the folios, numerous tinted drawings based on Persian, Mughal, and European materials as well as portraits and contemporary scenes, arabesques, landscapes, and other decorative designs were used.

Farrukh Beg was no longer involved in the task of manuscript illustration either in the imperial *taswirkhana* at Agra or in Salim's rebel court at Allahabad, between 1600 and 1605. The main activity of the *taswirkhana* in the following years under Jahangir was to complete the grand albums, draw copies of Persian masterworks and European engravings, and add new miniatures in rare and prized manuscripts collected in the *kitabkhana*. We come across at least three more paintings of Farrukh Beg carefully mounted on the folios of Jahangir Albums, two of them in the *Gulshan Muraqqa'*, Tehran. The other one is a detached leaf in the Naprstek Museum, Prague.



4. "Ibrahim 'Adil Shah II of Bijapur playing his favourite musical instrument". Inscribed by Muhammad Husayn Kashmiri Zarrinqalm attributing the work to Farrukh Beg, dated 1610-11. Folio from the Jahangir Album, Naprstek Museum, Prague, No. A12181.



5. "Prince in a landscape". By Farrukh Beg. Folio from the *Gulshan Muraqqa'*, Gulistan Palace Library, Tehran.

Judging from what remain as centrepieces or as margin decorations, two subjects appear to have found great favour with the painters of this time: adorable youths and venerable saints. From the middle of the sixteenth century young princes standing alone, reading, holding a stalk of narcissus or a bird, or a wine cup, conversing with an old teacher, or listening to music; beardless young men holding a scarf or wine cup; and aged Sufi saints, mullahs standing alone leaning on a staff or in divine ecstasy, conversing with a young prince or imparting lessons, appeared as favourite subjects in the works of Shaykh Muhammad, Mirza 'Ali, Mir Sayyid 'Ali, Shaykhzada, and others. With youthful patrons like Akbar and a few decades later Prince Salim, these subjects gained great currency in the Mughal *taswirkhana*. Many such images painted by Aqa Riza, Mirza Ghulam, Muhammad 'Ali, and Mansur occupy prominent places in the albums of Jahangir. During the later years of his service in the Mughal *taswirkhana*, Farrukh Beg also concentrated on these subjects and painted a number of stunning pictures of adorable youths and venerable saints. Two of these are mounted in the *Gulshan Muraqqa'* while the rest are found in albums prepared during the last few years of Jahangir's reign and the beginning of Shah Jahan's time. Most of these are either inscribed by the artist himself or authenticated by Jahangir or Shah Jahan.

Before discussing these it is necessary to examine two major works bearing Farrukh Beg's name. Both depict the Sultan of Bijapur, Ibrahim 'Adil Shah II. One of these, mounted on a Jahangir Album page, shows the music-loving sultan playing his favourite string instrument Moti Khan under a large tree with stylized foliage while three musicians pay him compliments (figure 4). As the main picture is squarish and smaller than the available space, two small European engravings were added above it, along with two lines of calligraphy from the pen of one of the most celebrated scribes of the age, Muhammad Husayn Kashmiri Zarrinqalm. The inscription identifies the sitter as Ibrahim 'Adil Shah of Bijapur, the painter as Farrukh Beg, and its date AH 1019/1610-11. The sultan does not look older than twenty-six or twenty-seven (he ascended the Bijapur throne in 1579 at the age of eight) and the painting shows signs of slight reworking, obviously to fit it into the slotted place.¹⁴ From all considerations it appears that Farrukh Beg reworked for Jahangir an earlier portrait of Ibrahim 'Adil painted in a style close to his own distinctive style. In the exchange of embassies with rare and costly gifts between the Adilshahis and the Mughals, books and pictures also featured prominently.¹⁵ This assumption, however, raises questions of its exact date and provenance that cannot be resolved to everyone's satisfaction in the absence of further corroborative evidence.

Some scholars have found that evidence in another stunning picture of young Ibrahim 'Adil Shah out on a hawking trip riding a majestic horse. In this remarkable study the landscape has a mystic otherworldly look with its dense foliage of magical forms in dark moss-green shrubs of blue star-shaped flowers, bluish hills, and rolling mounds of malachite green against a gold, blue, and white sky. The horse with its rich gold trappings gives the impression of not galloping but flying amidst the dark foliage and the heavily modelled face of the young king has a mask-like appearance.¹⁶ The figure of the richly bejewelled prince and some of the plants, trees, shrubs, and rolling hills are stylistically close to the picture of a young prince holding a volume in a garden, mounted in the *Gulshan Muraqqa'*,¹⁷ which is (to add to our dismay) not signed.

The best-known work of Farrukh Beg in the *Gulshan Muraqqa'* is that of a richly attired prince who stands in a landscape holding a golden wine cup in his gloved right hand and a majestic falcon in his ungloved left hand (figure 5). The hills in the background are not as craggy as in his earlier paintings. The jutting branch of the *chanar* with a flock of birds sitting on it reminds us of the *Akbarnama* miniature showing the meeting of Mir Mu'izz ul-Mulk and Bahadur Khan (see figure 3). The prince has some resemblance with the equestrian youth behind Akbar in the other *Akbarnama* miniature of Farrukh Beg (see figure 2). The gait of the youth and the position of the fur-collared,

gold-brocaded overcoat are closely connected with some Safavid works of “adorable youths”¹⁸ and the extraordinary drawing of a young man with a gold wine cup in the Arthur M. Sackler Museum, Harvard University, attributed to Aqa Riza.¹⁹ The small bushy trees of dense foliage with luminous edge against a golden sky are characteristic of his works while the large flowering plants on either side of the prince are new elements that became standard in his later works in different forms and colours.²⁰ It is signed by the painter, *kamtarin bandeha Farrukh musawwir*, on the ground above the lower left-hand corner.

The other painting in the *Gulshan Muraqqaʿ* is that of a slim, beardless youth standing facing left holding a stalk of narcissus.²¹ The figure is carefully observed and sensitively modelled. It displays some new features like a green grassy background with schematically arranged tufts of floral sprigs²² and the tall full-length leafy plants balancing with the principal subject. It contains a note written by Farrukh Beg stating it to be a work executed in his seventieth year. In the same year he painted several pictures: “Elegant page boy” in the Minto Album in the Chester Beatty Library and Oriental Gallery, “Aged mullah” in another part of the same album in the Victoria and Albert Museum, “Young man reading a book” in the Alwar Museum, and the recently discovered picture of an “Old Sufi” in a private collection. The last painting also gives the date of execution of 1615, thus establishing a sound chronological order of his activities in his later life. A close replica of the Gulshan “Youth holding narcissus” is in the Binney Collection with the inscription *ʿamal-i Farrukh Beg* written on the lower right corner in a coarse hand (figure 6).

The most notable work in the lot is the painting of an elegant page boy in the Chester Beatty Library and Oriental Gallery, Dublin (figure 7). The handsome youth stands on a curving bank amidst large flowering trees. Birds twitter around the bright polychrome flowers and leaves. The boy’s heavily shaded face has a chalky surface. He wears a brilliantly designed silken dress with an outer coat richly diapered with Chinese cloud patterns, and a long folded scarf and *patka* ending in gold patterned *pallavs*. He stands with languorous ease, a formal affected expression in his dreamy eyes. The flowering plants near his feet are typical of the painter — gorgeously coloured and pretty to look at but botanically impossible. Farrukh Beg has, in fact, created an elegant “type”, brilliant and well executed, but not the portrait of any living, recognizable individual.

The other “adorable youth” type painted by Farrukh Beg is that of a standing youth in the Nasir al-Din Album in the Iran Bastan Museum, Tehran (figure 8). He holds a mango branch with a large fruit in his right hand and a parakeet is perched on his left. The face beyond the nose, cheeks, neck, and the folds of his thick *jama* are heavily shaded. The large flowering plant on the left and the shrubs with flame-like leaves in the foreground have an air of decorative unreality. It bears a signature similar to the “spidery” handwriting of the painter found in other paintings. From the summary treatment of the background and the plain white patch to indicate the sky, the painting appears to be one of his later works. It reminds us of Shaykh Muhammad’s remarkable drawing of a youth with parakeet in the Freer Gallery of Art.²³ Two close replicas of this image have been traced — one in the Cowasji Jehangir Collection, Bombay²⁴ and the other in a Jaipur private collection (figure 9). The former has a Devanagari inscription on the back identifying the subject as a prince of the Qutbshahi rulers of Golconda. The latter has calligraphic panels around the painting. Both are unsigned and unattributed.

Another interesting work of Farrukh Beg bearing the same inscription, *ʿamal-i Farrukh Beg dar sanne haftad salegi kashide*, is in the Alwar Museum (figure 10). It shows a young man reading a book. His face is drawn with infinite care and heightened with subtle tonal modulation in the manner of Mughal masters. The eyes are focused towards the volume he is holding in his left hand. Barring the gold-designed end of the *patka*, the plumed turban, and the cover of the book, the picture is drawn with strong sweeping lines. The background is unpainted and bare, a small shrub and a few

6. "Young boy with narcissus". By Farrukh Beg. San Diego Museum of Art, Bequest of Edwin Binney 3rd.



7. "Elegant page boy". By Farrukh Beg, done at age seventy. Chester Beatty Library and Oriental Gallery, Dublin, MS. 7A (18).

stones indicate the slightly undulating ground on which the unknown gentleman is standing. It also carries a late inscription stating it to be a picture of Shah Tahmasp of Iran as prince. A very similar man on horseback carrying a falcon is found on the margin of a *Gulshan Album* folio, now in the Naprstek Museum.²⁵

The portrait of a young prince with a dated attribution to Farrukh Beg in Jahangir's autograph in the Nasir al-Din Album, Iran Bastan Museum, is problematic (figure 11). The inscription reads: 101(?) *'amal-e Farrukh Beg barrarahu Jahangir-e Akbar Shah*. Without casting any doubt on the authenticity of the autograph there are reasons to doubt the veracity of the attribution as the portrait and the details of landscape and background do not display any trait of Farrukh Beg's style.²⁶ It appears to us that an earlier drawing of Farrukh Beg was reworked in Shah Jahan's time to show Prince Dara Shukoh or some other prince. From the delicate gold decorations around Jahangir's signature it is obvious that the painting was reworked after it was inscribed. With the *Gulshan Muraqqa'* and other Mughal miniatures and manuscripts from Iranian collections remaining inaccessible, no final opinion on this is possible.

The Persian predilection for "adorable youths" from the later part of the sixteenth century and their appearance in the Mughal *taswirkhanas* of Akbar and Prince Salim through the works of Farrukh Beg, Aqa Riza, Muhammad 'Ali, Mirza Ghulam, and others have definite Sufistic bearing. The solitary, beardless, handsome young men wearing elegant costumes and posing in languid inaction holding a decorative device like a flower or a wine cup or a pet bird are nothing but *shabids* or "witnesses", the mystical vehicles whereby certain Sufis achieved religious ecstasy.²⁷ The paintings eulogizing the cult of princely youth directed towards Jahangir are, as pointed out by Simon Digby, paralleled

8. "Young man holding a parakeet and a mango". By Farrukh Beg. Nasir al-Din Album, Iran Bastan Museum, Tehran.

9. "Young man holding a parakeet and a mango". Unsigned and unattributed version of figure 8. Private collection, Jaipur.



by a long and celebrated *qasida* and several shorter pieces addressed to Prince Salim by 'Urfi, next to Fayzi the most celebrated sixteenth-century Persian poet in India.²⁸

The other subject dominating Farrukh Beg's later works is the venerable saintly figure of a teacher or mullah or a Sufi saint. From his early days Farrukh Beg took great pleasure in depicting old grey-bearded men — courtiers, generals, scholars, or saintly persons — as noticed in the illustrations to literary and historical works discussed above (cf. figures 2 and 3). In later life he singled out old Sufis or scholars for independent study. The best-known image of this type is that of an old savant leaning on a staff mounted in the Minto Album, Victoria and Albert Museum, London. Other examples are found in the same album and on a *wasli* in the Khuda Bakhsh Library. Recently, another remarkable study of an old Sufi has been acquired by an American private collector. The painting of an old man, mounted on an album folio formerly in the Ardeshir Collection with an attribution in Shah Jahan's hand, *sabib wa 'amal-e Farrukh Beg*, and the picture of four Sufis in a landscape in the National Library of Russia, St Petersburg, should also be included in this group.

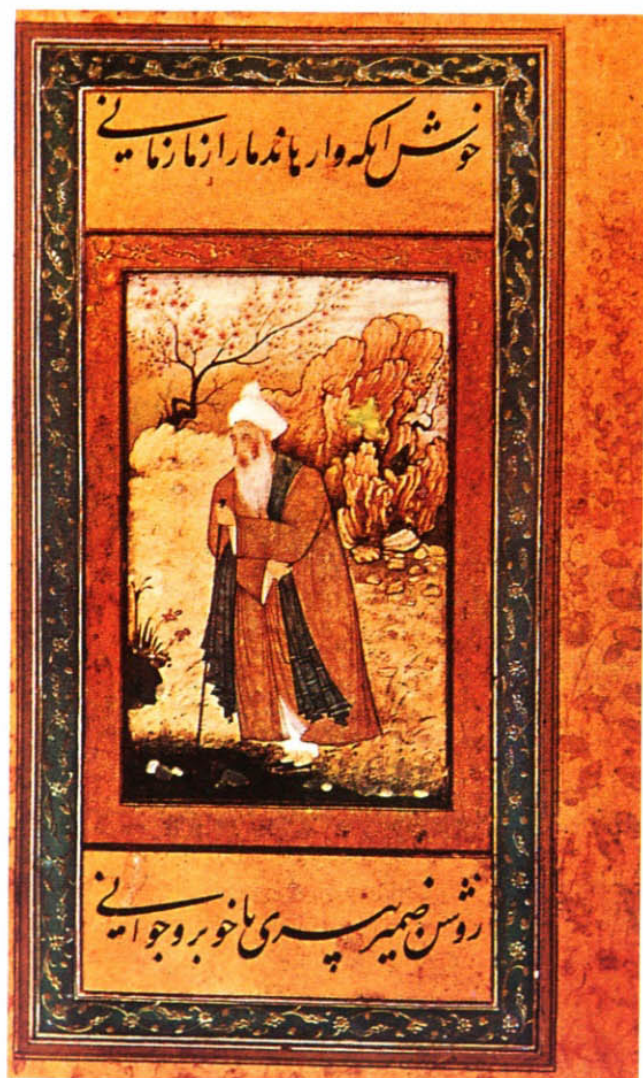
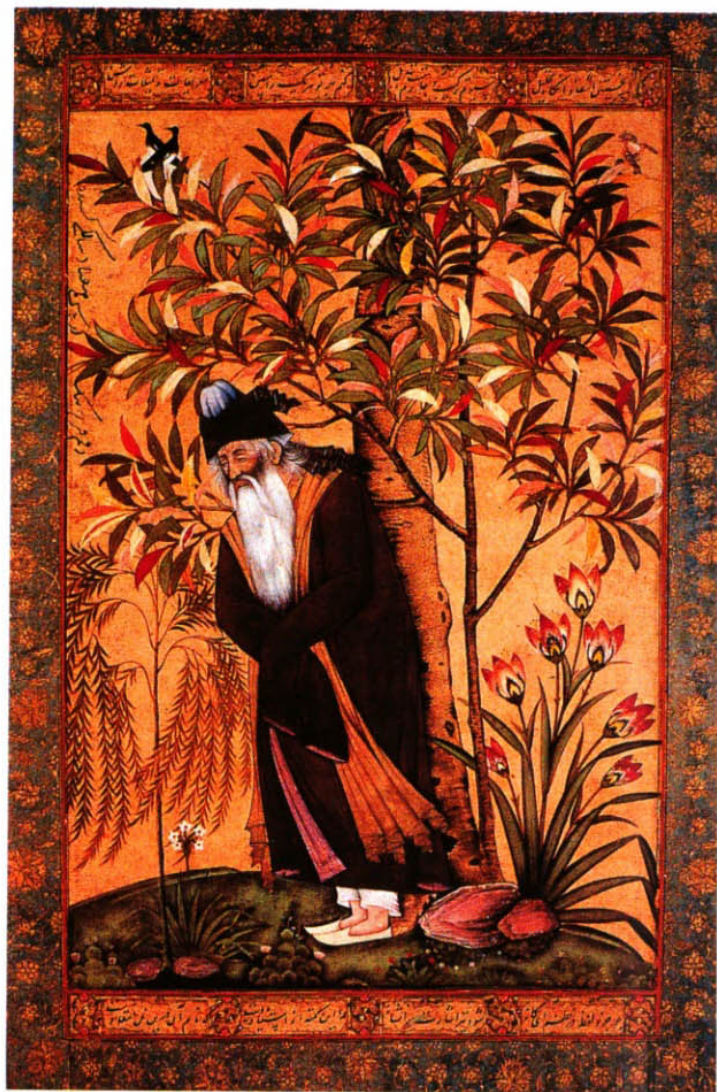
The Sufi in the Victoria and Albert Museum is a sensitively drawn portrait of a venerable old saint whose identity is unknown (figure 12). He stands on the mossy bank of a river or a pool, leaning against the thick trunk of a huge bay-like tree. He wears a grey ankle-length *jobba* of thick material with a pink lining, a pair of white pyjamas, a greyish head-dress with a white *kulah* and a long brownish scarf. The dangling edges of his overlong sleeves, the carefully pleated ends of the scarf and headcloth, and the artfully coiffeured grey-white beard and long hair once again display the care with which Farrukh Beg painted his subjects. A slender upright branch of the tree with its leaves painted in

10. "Young man reading a book". By Farrukh Beg, done at age seventy. Government Museum, Alwar. No. 1117/1859.

11. "A young prince". Inscribed: "Work of Farrukh Beg written by Jahangir son of Akbar dated 101 (?) Hijra". Nasir al-Din Album, Iran Bastan Museum, Tehran.



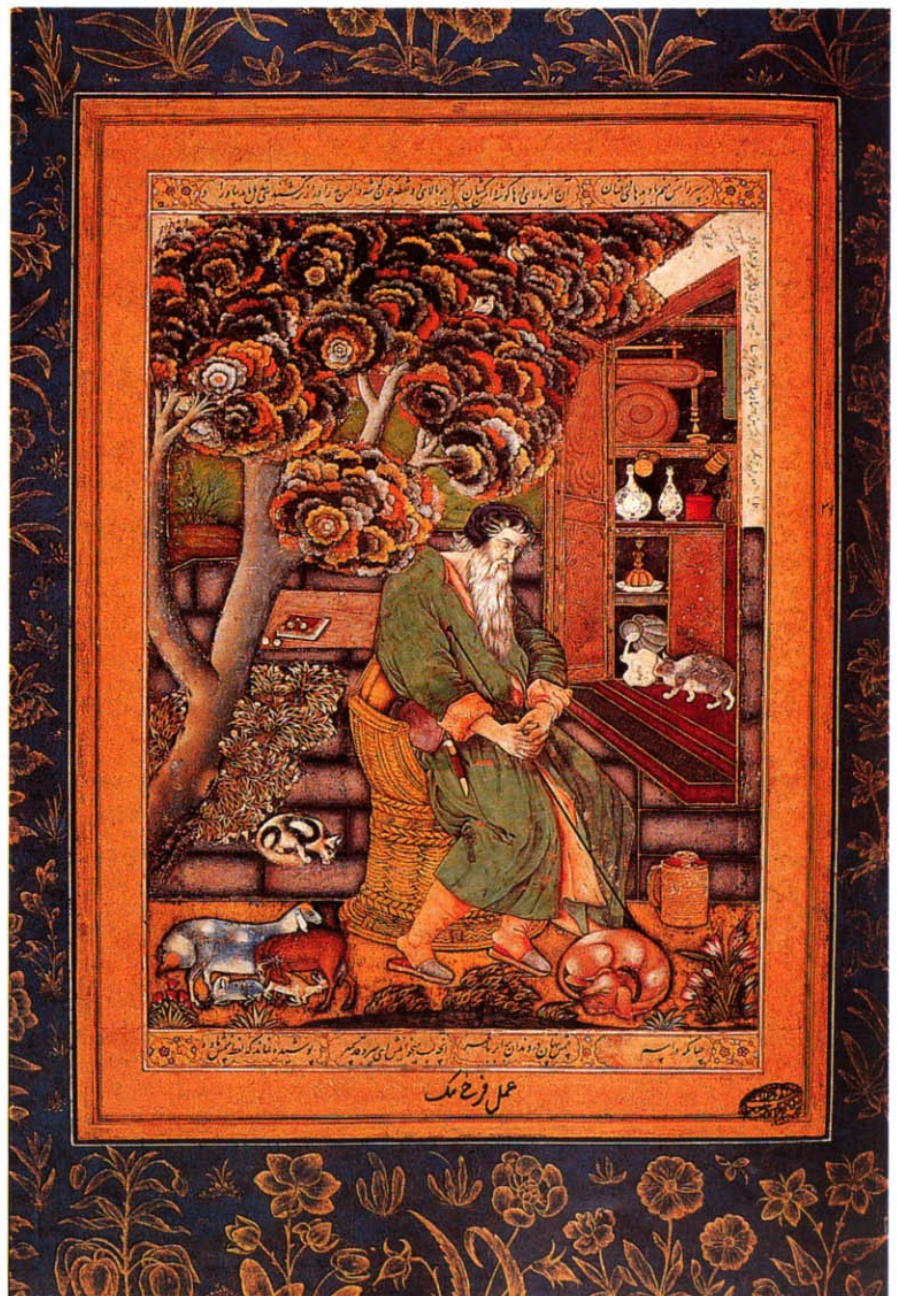
12. "Old Sufi". By Farrukh Beg, done at age seventy. Victoria and Albert Museum, London, IM. 10-1925. Courtesy of the Trustees of the V&A.



13. "Aged Mullah, leaning on a staff". Attributed to Farrukh Beg. (Khuda Bakhsh) Oriental Public Library, Patna.

different shades of green, interspersed with red, white, yellow, and orange help to provide a perfect balance while two pairs of lively hoopoes and blackbirds offset the monotony and unrealistic atmosphere. It also bears a note written vertically: *raqm-e Farrukh Beg dar haftad salegi kashide*, work of Farrukh Beg executed in his seventieth year.

The study in the Khuda Bakhsh Oriental Library is a drawing of an old Sufi leaning on a staff in a hilly landscape at the edge of a stream or pool (figure 13). The saint has a serene, contented, otherworldly expression on his sensitively drawn face. He holds a rosary in his right hand, but he has nothing to say, no sermons to preach, his very presence evokes respect in the viewer's mind. The picture is not signed but is in total conformity with Farrukh Beg's unmistakable style. A very similar image was included by him in the Rampur Hafiz manuscript illustration²⁹ facing the figure of the prince. The second Sufi saint in the Minto Album is, on the other hand, a tinted drawing like the Alwar Museum study (see figure 10). He stands slightly stooped, wearing a large skull-cap, a thick ankle-length *jobba* with its loose ends dangling. A thin stick helps to balance his leaning figure. The background is unpainted but carefully drawn flowering plants including an iris plant and



14. "Old Sufi". By Farrukh Beg Nadir al-'Asr, done at age seventy, dated in the tenth regnal year, 1024 Hijra (AD 1615). Private collection.

grassy tufts fill the foreground. Though the picture is not signed by Farrukh Beg, an attribution in Shah Jahan's hand on the floral mount below leaves no room to doubt its authenticity.

As already mentioned, the recently discovered picture of an old Sufi saint bearing a long dated inscription (figure 14) is a key document in Farrukh Beg's oeuvre. Stuart Cary Welch wrote a detailed monograph on it³⁰ demonstrating how Farrukh Beg at the fag end of his long career created a masterpiece partly based on the works of the German master, Albrecht Durer. This is his only painting inspired by European sources and ideas. Farrukh Beg, however, true to his nature, did not make a copy of Durer's work; he reinterpreted the Dutch engraving "Dolor" of Martin de Vos, by Raphael Sadeler I based on motifs from Durer's "St Jerome in his Study", "Melancolia I", and "Erasmus Rotterdam" to create his own composition. In this process he converted Christian saintliness into Muslim Sufihood. Unlike most other pictures of this period, he finished it in an opulent manner with a lavish use of gold and various other pigments, and series of objects and motifs to highlight the inner meaning of his theme. The pensive Sufi sits on a highback cane chair covered with gold, under a fantastic tree with thickly clustered cabbage-like leaves of unlikely shades of red, yellow, white, and grey in the basic greenery. The painting of Ibrahim 'Adil Shah (see figure 4) has similar cabbage-like foliage, and plants with multicoloured leaves have been noticed in the pictures of the "Old Sufi" (see figure 12) and "Young man holding a parakeet and a mango" (see figures 8 and 9). Cary Welch notices in the Sufi painting Farrukh Beg's "purest achievement, a summary and culmination of his artistic and spiritual growth".

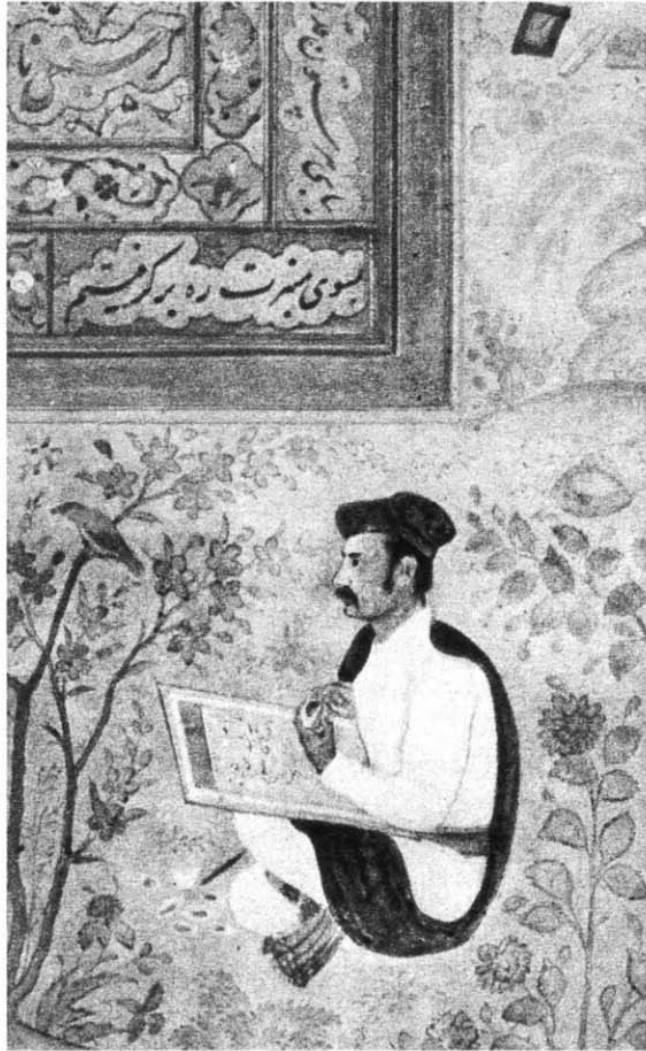
Muta'mad Khan writing in AH 1029 (AD 1619) in his *Iqbalnama-i Jahangiri* indicated that Farrukh Beg Musawwir "who has no equal or rival in the space of this universe", was then still alive.³¹ The portrait of a toothless old man leaning on a staff (figure 1) formerly in the Ardeshir Collection is a self-portrait drawn during his last days. The picture is not signed but the wording of Shah Jahan's noting on the lower mount, *sabih wa 'amal-e Farrukh Beg*, clearly indicates it is a self-portrait. It repeats many features present in the pictures discussed above, specially the young boy with narcissus (see figure 6) and the page boy (see figure 7) both painted in his seventieth year in 1615, such as the curved bank on which he stands, the flowering plants in the foreground, background of floral seme, and the patch of white cloud on the top. He wears a pensive look, his beard is not artfully hennaed, and his stick is more rounded and formidable.

On the lintel of a gateway in the miniature "Abu'l Adiyān praying on a fire watched by Zoroastrians" in the *Nafabat al-Uns* in the British Library, completed in 1604, the painter Daulat styles himself as a disciple of Farrukh.³² Daulat was a leading portraitist and had a distinct style with a preference for dense colours and razor-sharp lines, dominant features in Farrukh Beg's works. The marginal drawings of folio 8 obv. of the Jahangir Album in Berlin includes the figures of an old bearded teacher and young princely pupil³³ reflecting Farrukh Beg's characteristic style and figure "type". The presence of many pictures by Mirza Ghulam in the manuscripts prepared at Allahabad between 1599 and 1604 showing a strong impact of Farrukh Beg's distinctive style, and the large number of Farrukh Beg's pictures in the Jahangir Albums discussed above point to Jahangir's marked preference for this enigmatic master from his princely days.

Notes

1. Abu'l Fazl 'Allami, *Akbarnama*, tr. H. Beveridge (Calcutta 1909), vol. III, pp. 713-14; Abu'l Fazl 'Allami, *A'in-i Akbari*, tr. H. Blochmann (Calcutta 1873), vol. I, p. 108, where he is mentioned as Farrukh the Qalmaq.
2. *Tuzuk-i Jahangiri*, in English, tr. A. Rogers, ed. H. Beveridge (London 1909), vol. I, p. 159: "Two thousand rupees was given to Farrukh Beg *musawwir* who is unrivalled in the age".
3. Badri Atabai, *Febrist-i Muragqat-i Kitabkhana-i Saltanat* (Tehran AH 1353), p. 357. She also writes of another picture by Farrukh Husayn showing a nobleman playing a harp in a garden with

- a young attendant holding a vessel (p. 358) but does not illustrate it either. From her brief description of these two works it appears that Farrukh Husayn also had a distinct personal style and idiosyncrasies, and Jahangir found them worthy of his attention.
4. R. Skelton, "Indian Painting of the Mughal Period", in B.W. Robinson, ed., *Islamic Painting and the Arts of the Book* (London 1976), pp. 239-45.
 5. The *Haft Aurang* MS is in the Freer Gallery of Art while the Shir Nawa'i *Diwan* is in the Bibliothèque nationale, Paris. Cf. f. 68v of the Keir *Khamsa* with f. 169r of the Shir Nawa'i *Diwan* (S.C. Welch, *Royal Persian Manuscripts*, London 1976, plate 11) and f. 82v of the Keir *Khamsa* with f. 207v of the *Haft Aurang* (Welch, op. cit., fig. s).
 6. G.D. Lowry and M.C. Beach, *An Annotated and Illustrated Checklist of the Vever Collection* (Washington, DC 1988), nos. 60, 61, 62. Babur's reception scene is reproduced in colour in G.D. Lowry, *A Jeweler's Eye* (Washington, DC 1988), plate 49. The painting no. S86.0232 (checklist no. 62; John Seyller, "Farrukh Beg in the Deccan", *Artibus Asiae*, IV, No. 3/4, 1995, fig. 7) is even more interesting in the study of Farrukh Beg's style.
 7. M.S. Simpson, "Shaykh-Muhammad", in Sheila Canby, ed., *Persian Masters, Five Centuries of Painting* (Bombay 1990), p. 102, fig. 3.
 8. R. Skelton, "The Mughal Artist Farrokhs Beg", *Ars Orientalis*, II, 1957, fig. 15. First published by F.R. Martin 1912 (vol. II, plate 175).
 9. S.C. Welch, "Miniatures from a Manuscript of the *Diwan-i Hafiz*", *Marg*, vol. XI, no. 3, 1958, fig. 7.
 10. Simpson, op. cit., p. 103, fig. 5.
 11. Skelton, 1957, op. cit., fig. 12. First published by E. Kuhnelt, "Die indischen miniature der Sammlung Otto Sohn-Rethel", *Pantheon*, VIII (Munich 1931), fig. 4. The present whereabouts of the painting are not known.
 12. Milo Beach in Abolala Soudavar, *Art of the Persian Courts* (New York 1992), pp. 305-06, nos. 128b, 128c.
 13. Seyller, op. cit., p. 338, note 16: "But other than Farrukh Beg, which Akbari painter could have approximated the strongly Persianate style of Dust Muhammad this late into the sixteenth century?"
 14. Hana Knizkova, "Notes on the Portrait of Ibrahim 'Adil Shah II of Bijapur in the Naprstek Museum, Prague", in R. Skelton et al., eds., *Facets of Indian Art* (London 1987), pp. 116-23, especially pp. 120-21, fig. 6. See also, M. Zebrowski, "Transformations in seventeenth century Deccani paintings at Bijapur", in A. Krishna, ed., *Chhavi 2* (Benares 1981), pp. 171-74.
 15. *Tuzuk*, vol. II, pp. 36-37.
 16. M. Zebrowski, *Deccani Painting* (London 1983), pp. 92-95, plate IX. An extremely minute inscription within a golden cartouche near the upper right-hand corner of the picture gives the name of Farrukh Beg. It was read by F.R. Akimusk as *Husayn Farrukh Beg* (*The St Petersburg Muragga*), ARCH Foundation, Lugano 1996, pp. 97-98), and by Seyller, op. cit., p. 320, as '*amal-i Farrukh Beg ast*'. If the painter of this masterpiece is identified with Farrukh Beg, the problem of its exact date and provenance would remain unresolved as Ibrahim 'Adil appears beardless and therefore it cannot be dated much beyond 1590. S.C. Welch has recently attributed it to Muhammad 'Ali. See note 20 below.
 17. Atabai, op. cit., plate facing p. 350.
 18. Skelton, 1957, op. cit., p. 411, citing E. Blochet, *Les peintures orientales de la collection Pozzi* (Paris 1928), plate II.
 19. E. Schroeder, *Persian Miniatures in the Fogg Museum of Art* (Cambridge, Mass. 1942), pp. 109-13, plate XIX; Amina Okada, *Indian Miniatures of the Mughal Court* (New York 1992), fig. 115.
 20. These also occur in the works of Muhammad 'Ali, another enigmatic master working in the Mughal *taswirkhana* at the turn of the seventeenth century. For details of his works, vide, M.C. Beach, *Grand Mogul* (Williamstown, Mass. 1978), pp. 144-46 and S.C. Welch, "Reflections on Muhammad 'Ali", in A. Giese and J.C. Burgel, eds., *Gott ist schon und Er liebt die Schonheit* (Bern 1992), pp. 407-20.
 21. Atabai, op. cit., plate facing p. 352.
 22. This feature is also noticed in the picture of the enthroned Muhammad Qutb Shah of Golconda in the British Museum, No. 1937. 4-10.01: D. Barrett, *Painting of the Deccan XVI-XVII century* (London 1958), plate 8, and J.P. Losty, "The Development of the Golconda Style", in John Guy, ed., *Indian Art and Connoisseurship* (Ahmedabad 1995), p. 296, fig. 4.
 23. E. Atil, *The Brush of the Masters, Drawings from Iran and India* (Washington, DC 1968), No. 16.
 24. Karl Khandalavala and Moti Chandra, *Miniatures and Sculptures from the Collection of the late Sir Cowasji Jehangir Bart.* (Bombay 1965), p. 42, colour plate M.
 25. L. Hajek, *Indian Miniatures of the Moghul School* (London 1960), plate 30.
 26. Skelton, 1957, op. cit., pp. 403-04.
 27. S.C. Welch, 1992, op. cit., pp. 414f., quoting extensively from A. Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam* (Chapel Hill 1975), pp. 289ff.
 28. Personal communication. Digby's elaborate note on the "Cult of Youth" in Persian literature and art is unpublished.
 29. Vide note 9.
 30. S.C. Welch, *India* (New York 1985), pp. 224-25, No. 147.
 31. *Iqbalnama-i Jahangiri*, vol. II, p. 389, quoted by S.P. Verma, *Mughal Painters and Their Work* (New Delhi 1994), p. 147.
 32. A.K. Das, *Mughal Painting During Jahangir's Time* (Calcutta 1978), pp. 176, 184, and 201, note 37. The painting is reproduced in colour by J.P. Losty, *Indian Paintings in the British Library* (New Delhi 1986), plate VIII, where the inscription is not visible. Losty however read it as: Daulat, disciple of Basawan.
 33. E. Kuhnelt and H. Goetz, *Indian Book Painting* (London 1926), plate 38 lower panel.



Bishandas: “Unequalled in his
Age in Taking Likenesses”

Asok Kumar Das

In August 1613, a few days before leaving for Ajmer, Jahangir sent a high-profile embassy to the court of Shah 'Abbas in Persia under his trusted courtier Khan 'Alam. Though he does not give any detail in the *Tuzuk*, it was an elaborate affair with a suit of eight hundred people, ten elephants and many horses and camels, and rare and costly presents befitting the grandeur and magnificence of the Mughal court, as known from a contemporary Persian account.¹ The mission is noted for the fact that a painter was included solely to bring back portraits of the Shah and the chief men of the state. The painter was none other than Bishandas who was considered by Jahangir "unequalled in his age in taking likenesses".

I

Bishandas was already working in Akbar's *taswirkhana* in about 1590-91 when the first and the finest copy of the *Baburnama* was being prepared. His name is written on a double-page illustration² showing Babur supervising the laying of Bag-e Wafa, the Garden of Fidelity, near Adinabad, midway between Kabul and Peshawar. The composition showing the garden nestled in a hilly landscape is well-balanced, the drawing precise, and the colouring pleasing to the eye. Interestingly, Bishandas is named as the painter of the work while his uncle Nanha is the portraitist who retouched the faces of important people. Clearly, the man billed later as unequalled in his age in taking likenesses was not yet ready to tackle faces!

Nor was Bishandas among the large number of painters producing hundreds of miniatures for the splendid manuscripts being illustrated in the Lahore and Agra *taswirkhanas* during the last fifteen years of Akbar's reign. He probably was part of Prince Salim's own *taswirkhana* with the Persian emigre painter Aqa Riza as its head. When Salim broke away from Akbar and established an independent court at Allahabad in November 1599 his painters followed suit. During the short period of five years that he lived there, his scribes and painters produced more than half a dozen manuscripts and albums of paintings.³ The style developed in Salim's *taswirkhana* is simpler and much less sophisticated than the imperial productions. The preferred colour scheme is never very loud and the figures move at a gentle pace. The illustrations are mostly unsigned and unattributed with the exception of ten (out of forty-one) in the *Jog Vashisht* (1602) and one (out of fourteen) in the *Diwan* of Amir Hasan Dihlavi (1602). Bishandas figures in the former. His hand can be recognized among the unsigned illustrations of these as well as the *Raj Kunwar* (1603). The painters were illustrating an elegant sixteenth-century *Anwar-e Subayli* written in Naskh when Salim left Allahabad in September 1604. The work was completed six years later. As many as thirty-two (out of thirty-six) are either signed or attributed to painters active at Allahabad, including Bishandas.

Salim returned to Agra in September 1604 after his differences with Akbar were resolved, and lived there till he ascended the Mughal throne as Emperor Jahangir in October 1605. Several manuscripts were under production in the imperial *taswirkhana* including the second *Akbarnama* and the *Nafabat al-Uns* (which contains a colophon with the words "written at Agra for the library of Akbar in the 49th Ilahi"). An opulently produced large-size copy of *Kulliyat-e Sa'di* and a *Bustan*, both written by 'Abd ur-Rahim 'Anbarinqalm, are generally associated with Salim as the illustrations include works of painters like Aqa Riza, Mirza Ghulam, Abu'l Hasan, Salim Quli, and Bishandas, all employed in Salim's *taswirkhana*. It should be remembered that only two illustrations of the *Kulliyat* are inscribed to Hiranand and Dharamdas,⁴ and one folio of the *Bustan* is signed by Daulat, and the names mentioned here are all attributions made by different scholars. Milo Beach has attributed the illustration "The old man who reared a wolf", on folio 186v of the *Bustan*, to Bishandas on stylistic grounds.⁵

On his accession Jahangir examined the treasures of Akbar's immense collection of manuscripts and autographed many of them. He noticed blank spaces in some of the

1. Portrait of Bishandas by Daulat. Marginal drawing on folio 44 of the Gulshan Album, Gulistan Palace Library, Tehran (from Godard, 1936, cited in note 6).

finest and rarest of them, and the existing miniatures in a few others did not appeal to his taste. He decided to have them retouched or repainted or have the unpainted spaces filled with new illustrations.

Khusrau's rebellion in March 1606 created confusion in Jahangir's life and disrupted the pace of work in the *taswirkhana*. After Khusrau's capture and the harsh punishment meted out to his associates and accomplices, Jahangir decided to remain in Lahore for some time. This was followed by a leisurely visit to Kabul — the city closely associated with his ancestors. Aqa Riza was sent to Allahabad to complete the grand mausoleum of Shah Begum, Khusrau's mother, being built in the Khusrau Bagh there. The rest of the *taswirkhana* was engaged in embellishing the living quarters of Jahangir in Agra Fort that included many panels of European subjects.

While all the work connected with manuscripts taken in hand was allowed to be completed after the emperor's return to Agra in March 1608, not many new commissions were taken up. The painters were also kept busy with the compilation of the royal *muraqqa'* to house the large and valuable collection of Persian masterworks, early Mughal works of Khwaja 'Abd us-Samad, Mir Sayyid 'Ali, Dust Muhammad, Farrukh Beg, and Aqa Riza, European engravings with copies and adaptations thereof, and numerous specimens of calligraphy by eminent masters. The wide margins of these pages were tastefully and delicately ornamented in gold with geometrical, arabesque, landscape, and floral motifs. In most pages the calligraphic panels also contained figural designs of exceptionally high quality showing Jahangir and male and female members of the royal family, nobles, holy men, poets, calligraphers, painters, artisans, and professionals engaged in their work. Bishandas was an active participant in this grand project as he illustrated at least the margins of two folios of the *Muraqqa'-e Gulshan*.⁶ In one of these his name is written on an open book before an old unnamed calligrapher. Daulat, one of the finest portrait painters of Jahangir, painted amidst the delicate golden decorations of a folio of the same album four portraits of his colleagues — Manohar, Abu'l Hasan, Govardhan, and Bishandas (figure 1), and a self-portrait. These delicate thumbnail studies are among the very greatest Mughal portraits and the only contemporary likenesses of the painters.

During this period Jahangir engaged Bishandas to rework the three illustrations made by Shaikhzada, a painter of repute. One of these, "Sa'di's visit to the temple of Somnath", was substantially repainted, while the other two, "Dara and the herdsman", and a garden scene, were retouched by changing the faces of the principal characters.⁷ Though Bishandas's name is not to be found anywhere in the work, there is no doubt about his hand in the reworking and repainting of the illustrations. In Sa'di's visit to the temple the original architectural backdrops with glittering decorations based on a celebrated composition of the great Persian master, Bihzad, were left untouched; only the interior of the "temple" was repainted, changing the crowd of people — priests, devotees, students, and onlookers — from Persian to Indian. The old bearded figure of Sa'di was however left unretouched. The devotees, priests, and others immediately recall the lively figures of men and women in the early compositions of Bishandas in the *Jog Vashisht* and *Anwar-e Subayli*. They are no longer members of a faceless crowd but individuals with distinct personalities.

One of the few books prepared for Jahangir was a *Shahnama* that was under production in 1610-11 as revealed by a signed and dated illustration by Musfiq.⁸ The MS is now dispersed. The available folios show delicate decorations in gold of the same type as the *Farhang-e Jahangiri* of Mir Jamal Husayn 'Inju (1609-10), now dispersed. A detached illustration of the *Shahnama* in the Los Angeles County Museum of Art is inscribed to 'Inayat and Bishandas (figure 2). It illustrates the incident of Faridun the Persian hero killing the oppressive Arabic ruler of Persia, Zakhak, with an animal-headed mace in the female quarters. Bishandas, who specialized in harem scenes, must have been responsible for depicting the women of Zakhak's zenana.



2. "Faridun killing Zahhak". Illustration from a dispersed *Shahnama*, by 'Inayat and Bishandas. Circa 1610-11. Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Nasli and Alice Heeramaneck Collection, Museum Associates. Purchase M.78.9.15.

3. (Top left) "Raja Suraj Singh Rathore". Inscribed by Jahangir: "Work of Bishandas. Portrait of Raja Suraj Singh, the maternal uncle of Khurram who made a stay in the year 1017 [April 1608]". (Below left) "Bahadur Khan Uzbek". Inscribed by Jahangir: "Portrait of Bahadur Khan Uzbek, Hakim of Kandahar. Work of Bishandas". Staatsbibliothek Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Berlin, The Jahangir Album, folio 22b.



At this time Jahangir wanted to salvage a large cloth painting showing an imaginary assembly of the princes of the House of Timur in a garden, probably painted for Humayun. The pavilion area in the centre of the composition was repainted several times to accommodate the successive emperors — Humayun, Akbar, Jahangir, and Shah Jahan, with young Parvez and Khurram standing outside. Two rows of Timurid princes are seated in the foreground while attendants and courtiers are busy with their entertainment. John Seyller was able to trace very minute signatures of painters engaged in retouching some of the figures and read the names of Balchand, Bichitr, Daulat, Govardhan, Hiranand, 'Inayat, Mohan, Narsingh, Nanha, and Bishandas.⁹ The figures are so rubbed that it is not possible to make any comment on their work.

While discussing the content of the Jahangiri *muraqqa's* it should be remembered that a total of less than 150 folios have been found so far, and most of these are still unpublished. To add to the problem only a small number of paintings are signed by the painter or identified by Jahangir, and the marginal decorations are mostly uninscribed. Among the small number of inscribed portraits, two are from Bishandas's brush.

Jahangir's brother-in-law Raja Suraj Singh Rathore of Jodhpur visited him shortly after his return from Lahore in March 1608. On Jahangir's order Bishandas prepared a portrait of the Raja which the emperor inscribed in his own hand (figure 3, top left). It is a simple and straightforward portrait study with the subject standing in a formal manner with his hands clasped and face in profile. His eyes are shown looking away from the viewer. Attired in a simple diaphanous *jama* over a pair of tight trousers with a beautifully designed *patka* and a long narrow white scarf, the king has only two strands of pearls and a gold-handled *katar* tucked in his waistcloth as ornaments. Bishandas's study was

adopted as the standard likeness of the king copied in every court scene in the *Jahangirnama* and the *Padshahnama*. Another version of the portrait made by Bishandas for Prince Khurram is mounted in an album of portraits, natural history drawings, and other subjects, now preserved in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. It carries an attribution in Shah Jahan's hand: "*Sabib-i Raja Suraj Singh Rathore, kar-e Bishandas*".¹⁰

The other individual portrait drawn by Bishandas and mounted in the Berlin Album shows the high-ranking noble Bahadur Khan Uzbek (figure 3, below left). It also contains a note in Jahangir's hand identifying the subject as "Bahadur Khan Uzbek, Hakim of Kandahar". Bahadur Khan was a connoisseur of art and literature as known from a small refined copy of Nizami's *Khamsa* written at Agra between 1613 and 1615.¹¹ He was promoted to the position of Hakim in 1612 and was relieved from the post in 1620/21 due to failing eyesight. He came to meet Jahangir just before his retirement. The portrait is well drawn and clearly brings out the sharp features of the old Khan. His face is shown in three-quarter profile. His hands are similarly placed as in the portrait of Suraj Singh, but the back of the palm and the fingers are drawn with greater care. The same care was bestowed in delineating the hennaed beard and luxurious dress worn by him.



4. "The house of Shaikh Phul". Inscribed by Jahangir: "Picture of Shaikh Phul, the *majzub* [possessed] who is now living at Agra. Work of Bishandas". Circa 1610. Bharat Kala Bhavan, Varanasi, no. 5410.



Bishandas was at his best when he painted the full-page picture "The house of Shaikh Phul" for Jahangir (figure 4). It combines on the one hand his skill in handling a large number of people from different walks of life assembled within the confines of the hermitage of the well-known Sufi saint on a visit to Agra, and his clever use of muted and subtle colours to create an atmosphere of purity and devotion. It carries a rather coarsely written inscription in Jahangir's hand. In the Mughal *taswirkhana* Sufi saints, mullahs, and devotees received special notice and careful treatment as is apparent from the large number of individual studies and illustrations in manuscripts like the *Nafabat al-Uns*, or the picture of Jahangir's interviews with the famous Hindu saint Jadrup (or Chidrup). In this wonderful painting the old bearded Shaikh clad only in the barest loincloth is totally oblivious of the crowds of people including a prince and his scholarly companions, men carrying vessels, guards, women and a child, shown around his single-cell house. The lush green leaves of the huge double-trunk neem tree provide an effective balance against the humdrum activities around and in the courtyard of the Shaikh's house. A pair of common crows on the roofs of surrounding buildings of the Mughal capital provide curious relief.

The same concern for expression and mood is also apparent in a superbly competent study for the unfinished *Jahangirnama* in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, showing the scene of the birth of a prince (figure 5). The picture is not signed or identified but scholars in the field are unanimous in attributing it to Bishandas as the stamp of his style is apparent everywhere in the painting. The scene is composed in two distinct panels, the upper half presenting a graphic view of the women's quarters at the time of a royal birth (probably of Prince Salim in the humble abode of the venerated Shaikh Salim Chisti at Sikri village near Agra), while the lower half provides glimpses of life outside the palace walls. In the centre of the upper part the rather dark-complexioned princess who has just delivered the baby is shown resting on a low bed placed in a pavilion. The newborn child with a halo around his tiny head is held by a young maid while two other maids look after the mother. A matronly woman sits on a chair placed close to the pavilion. From her Chaghatai head-dress and the placing of the foot-cushion she appears to be none other than Akbar's mother Hamida Banu Begum. Another Chaghatai woman wearing a red shawl sits on the edge of an opulent gold-bordered blue-ground floral carpet. A large number of young and old women are shown behind the lady seated on a chair, while another big group of female musicians, maids, and attendants assemble on the left to celebrate the happy event. In the lower part, four Hindu and Muslim astrologers are engrossed in casting the horoscope of the newborn prince. Retainers bring large trays covered with brocaded *thalposh*, while a well-built woman guards the zenana entrance and other women come into or out of it, and a young inquisitive girl steals a peep from the side of the *kanat*. A tree with dark green foliage outside the wall artfully combines the activities going on in the two halves of the composition. The minute and naturalistically rendered details of the Mughal zenana have been rightly attributed to Bishandas as he composed several zenana scenes in the Allahabad studio.

The portrait of an unidentified court lady recently acquired by the Freer Gallery of Art, Washington, DC, and attributed to Bishandas by Beach,¹² is very much in his style. Such figures are common in his compositions like the scene of the royal birth discussed above. The treatment is sensitive and the muted colours used by the painter have made the subject very graceful.

II

As part of Jahangir's embassy to Shah 'Abbas in 1613, Bishandas spent almost five years in Persia. No detailed account of his activities there is known and very few of his works done at the Persian court have survived. However, Jahangir was pleased with Bishandas's portrait of the Shah. As noted in the *Tuzuk*: "He had drawn the likenesses of most of

5. "Birth of a prince".
Attributed to Bishandas.
Page from the
Jahangirnama. Museum of
Fine Arts, Boston,
no. 14.657.

6. "Shah 'Abbas examining a falcon in the garden". Inscribed to Bishandas. Folio 37 from the St Petersburg Album. St Petersburg: Academy of Science, Institute of Oriental Studies, Album E14.



them, and especially had taken that of my brother the Shah exceedingly well, so that when I showed it to any of his servants, they said it was exceedingly well drawn."¹³

Since Bishandas was the first painter officially sent to the Persian court and his presence there generated a good number of paintings from Persian as well as Indian painters over a long period of time, he became a subject of detailed enquiry by renowned historians of Mughal and Persian art including Ananda Coomaraswamy, Ernst Kuhnle, Ivan Stchoukine, Basil Robinson, Ernst Grube and Eleanor Sims.¹⁴ Fresh material has surfaced even in recent years, adding a new dimension to this particular phase of his career.

Only three unsigned drawings and preliminary sketches of Shah 'Abbas and five fully painted standing portraits showing him holding a long gun or musket or a scimitar, or with his hands tucked under his waistcloth, have been found, all mounted in albums compiled at various times. In addition to these, one painting showing him examining a

falcon in a garden (figure 6) and a pastiche showing him on horseback (figure 7) are mounted in the St Petersburg *Muraqqa'*. Two separate fully painted versions of the meeting of Shah 'Abbas with the Mughal envoy Khan 'Alam, mounted on the folios of two different Shah Jahan albums have survived. One of these is signed by Bishandas. A damaged sketch of the same episode has also come to notice.

A pencil drawing touched with black and red ink and white paint shows Shah 'Abbas standing to the waist, facing right, his arms tucked in his sash. Noticed by Otto Kurz in the Barberini Album in the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, this is considered to be one of the original sketches made by Bishandas.¹⁵ The artist has tried to amend the position of the hands and the waistband, and left the rest in its first tentative state. The drawing is somewhat dry and lacks vigour, but the face is lively though the eyes are transfixed somewhat awkwardly as if looking at a flying falcon in the distant sky. There is



7. "Shah 'Abbas riding a horse". Inscribed to Bishandas. Folio 36r from the St Petersburg Album. St Petersburg: Academy of Science, Institute of Oriental Studies, Album E14.

8. "Shah 'Abbas standing". Inscribed to Bishandas. A later inscription wrongly identifies the subject as 'Isa Khan or 'Ali Khan. Collection of Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan, Geneva.

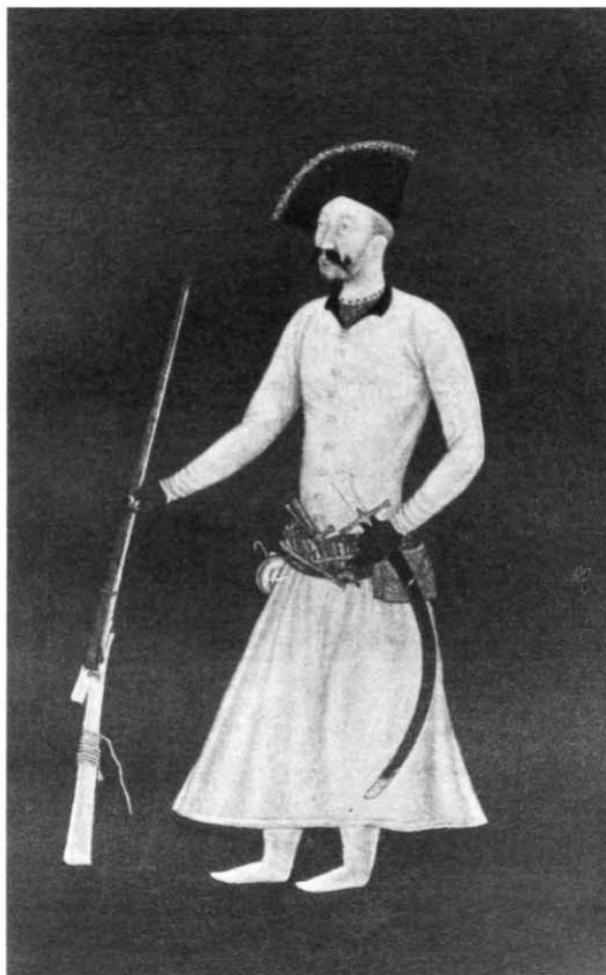


9. "Shah 'Abbas standing". Attributed to Bishandas. From the Album of Ashraf Khan, The British Museum, London, no. 1920, 9-17 013 (2).

a close replica of this drawing in a private collection but only to just above the waist.¹⁶ The quality of this sketch is very high too, and it may also be considered one of the original sketches for the Shah 'Abbas portrait.

Two fully painted pictures of Shah 'Abbas based on these drawings are known, though both of them show him facing left. The first of these originally mounted in the Awadh Album in the British Museum shows the Persian emperor standing facing left with his hands tucked under his sash (figure 9). A scimitar and a knife are tied to it. His face is in three-quarter profile and he wears a plumed turban. Though the pose is formal and the posture is stiff there is warmth in his facial expression. The second picture is a close replica where the Shah stands in a similar manner with the hands tucked under the sash in the same way (figure 8). The scimitar is, however, missing and the head-dress is also different. The painter has used very light shading in the face to indicate volume. Bishandas's name is written in the lower left in a late hand and another inscription written in the lower right corner identifies the subject as 'Isa Khan (or 'Ali Khan). In spite of some resemblance with the person identified as 'Isa Khan Qurchibashi seated to the right of Khan 'Alam in the Boston group (see figure 11), there is no doubt that the standing portrait is that of Shah 'Abbas.

In the second group of paintings Shah 'Abbas is shown wearing a karakul cap, with a musket in his right hand while the left rests on the handle of the scimitar hanging from his waist. The finest of this group is mounted on a folio of the Nasir al-Din Album in the Iran Bastan Museum, Tehran (figure 10). Though the portrait is not signed, there is no doubt about its authenticity as an attribution to Bishandas is made in Shah Jahan's hand on the lower mount. A close but slightly insipid version is placed in the Barberini Album, which appears to be a copy made from a pounce as some of the details of the Tehran

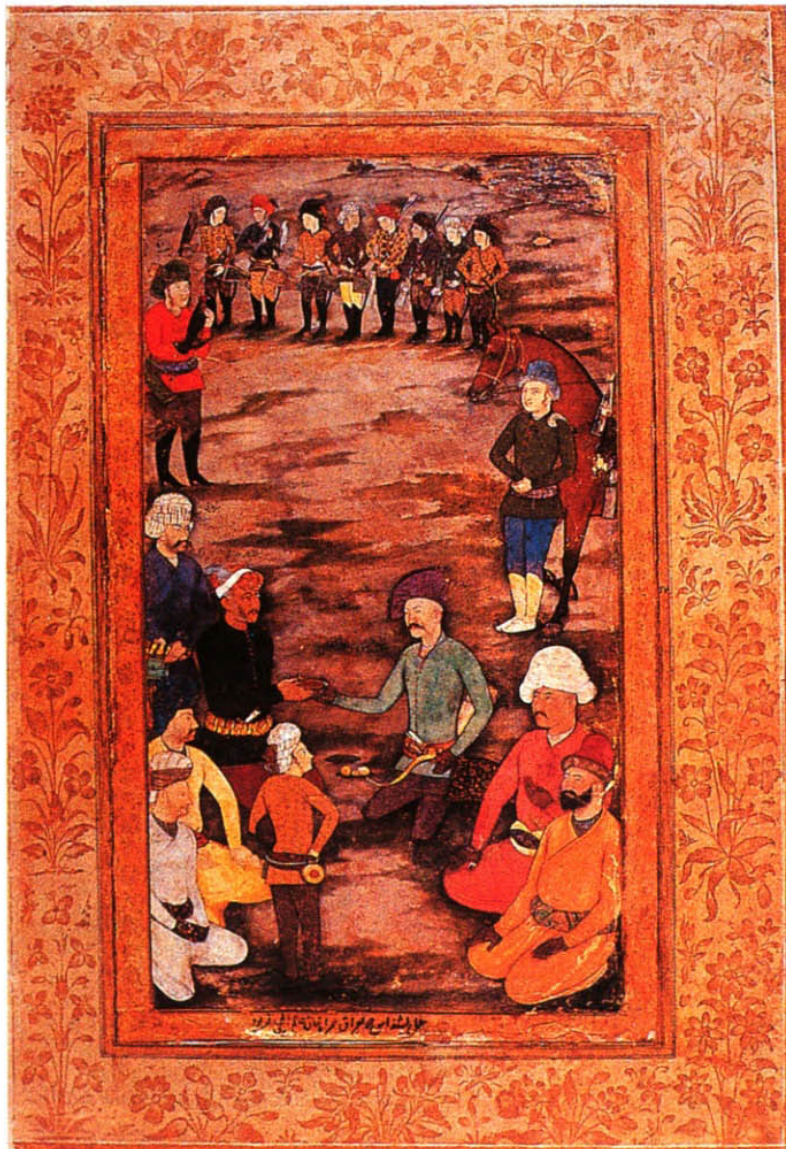


10. "Shah 'Abbas standing with a musket". Attributed to Bishandas. Page from the Nasir al-Din Album, Iran Bastan Museum, Tehran (from Godard, 1937, fig. 78, cited in note 23).

portrait are wanting in this version.¹⁷ The third version originally placed in the Warren Hastings Album is an early eighteenth-century copy in which the Shah is shown aureoled and holding a falcon in his right hand. He wears a very short *jama* and high boots, and his moustache is longer than usual.¹⁸ These features created problems in identifying the subject but Grube and Sims do not have any doubt that it shows Shah 'Abbas. A late watered-down copy of the same portrait is reported to be in the Douce Album, Bodleian Library, Oxford.

Khan 'Alam was received by the Shah with great cordiality and the meeting of Shah 'Abbas and Khan 'Alam was recorded not only by Bishandas but also by Riza, the chief painter of the Persian court. Basil Robinson traced eleven pictorial versions of this momentous event that have now increased to sixteen in Grube and Sims's listing. Though Bishandas's original painting and a second version from his brush have been found, Riza's original is not known to have survived. The general features of Riza's painting are deduced from later versions based on it. As pointed out by Robinson these two artists depicted the same incident in their own way. In Riza's version following the prevailing court etiquette the figures are all standing but in Bishandas's version they are all shown seated. Riza 'Abbasi's original image was copied in 1633 for the royal physician Muhammad Shamsa. It is mounted in an album in the St Petersburg Public Library. A double-page version of the scene made by Mu'in Musawwir in 1702 is in the Bibliotheque Nationale, Paris. As was the

11. (Facing page)
"Shah 'Abbas and Khan
'Alam sitting in a landscape
with other courtiers".
Inscribed to Bishandas.
Folio from the Late Shah
Jahan Album, Museum of
Fine Arts, Boston, no.
14.665.



12. "Shah 'Abbas and
Khan 'Alam sitting in a
landscape with hunters and
falconers standing behind".
Folio from a Shah Jahan
Album. Inscribed on lower
margin, "the work of
Bishandas who
accompanied Khan 'Alam to
'Iraq". Private collection.



practice with Mu'in, the picture contains a long inscription: "In the year 1022/1613-14 my master Riza-i 'Abbasi executed this portrait. The most humble Mu'in the painter completed it in the year 1113/1702-03", and "this portrait of Khan 'Alam, ambassador of Hindustan sent by Shah Salim to the court which is the asylum of the world, was executed by my master in the year 1024/1615-16 and the most humble slave Mu'in the painter completed it in 1113/1702-03".

Bishandas composed the scene in a different manner. Perhaps the earliest and the least complicated version is the picture mounted on a Late Shah Jahan Album folio, now in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (figure 11). Khan 'Alam is shown seated before the Persian monarch who is offering a cup of wine to the Mughal envoy and the latter holds out both hands to receive it. Three Persian courtiers — 'Isa Khan Qurchibashi, Saru Khwaja (Sharim Kashi), and Isfandiyar Beg — are seated before them. Two young pages are in attendance, the Persian holding a wine flask while the Indian holds Khan 'Alam's *buqqa*, for which the Mughal envoy obtained the Shah's special permission.¹⁹ The details of the scene correspond with what Jahangir noted in the *Tuzuk* about the special treatment meted out to the envoy by the Persian monarch breaking all precedents. The landscape where the meeting took place is carefully painted with twin trees (reminding us of the trees in the pictures of "The house of Shaikh Phul" and "Birth of a prince" discussed above) on a hillside and a cloudy sky. Robinson has listed four simplified versions of this picture made at different dates in India and Persia.

In the second rendering of the scene there are as many as five examples in different collections. The earliest and the finest amongst these was until recently in the British Railway Pension Fund (figure 12).²⁰ It was mounted on a folio of a Shah Jahan album with delicate golden designs in its margins. A fine but late copy of the work originally in the Rothenstein Collection is in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.²¹ These show Shah 'Abbas and Khan 'Alam seated in a hilly landscape surrounded by five Persian courtiers and a young page with a wine jug under his arm. Above the group are a young falconer, a groom leading a horse, and at the top of the picture a row of eight young Persians carrying falcons, muskets, and swords. O.C. Gangoly published a damaged sketch from the Tagore Collection, Calcutta, since dispersed, showing the same scene but with the position of the principal figures reversed — Shah 'Abbas on the left and Khan 'Alam on the right.²² As in the Boston picture it bears an inscription, "amal-e Bishandas", in a later hand. From the reproduction the drawing appears to be more lively and forceful than the finished pictures in Boston and London. Though some scholars have judged the London picture to be earlier than the Boston example, to us the latter appears more in line with Bishandas's style and interpretation of the scene. The similarities in treatment of border figures and the portraits in the central scene do create some confusion but the portraits of Shah 'Abbas, Khan 'Alam, and 'Isa Khan Qurchibashi have distinct and recognizable traits of Bishandas's style. The other two later versions are in the British Museum and the Museum of Cultures of Eastern Peoples, Moscow.

Though Jahangir wanted to have portraits of the chief men of Persia painted by Bishandas, only two examples have surfaced. One of these is the portrait of Khodabande Mirza, who abdicated the throne for his son 'Abbas, mounted in the Nasir al-Din Album. It has an autograph note by Jahangir: "Khodabande Mirza, father of my brother Shah 'Abbas" (figure 13).²³ Judging from Yedda Godard's reproduction in the *Althar-e Iran* it appears to be a stereotyped and formal study adapted from some Persian work. The Mirza died long before Bishandas's visit. The other portrait, formerly in the J.C. French Collection,²⁴ is that of a heavily-built unidentified man examining a falcon given by Khan 'Alam seated by his right.

A direct fall-out of this visit was reflected in the choice of subjects painted on Jahangir's orders in 1620 on the walls of a garden pavilion in Kashmir. He noted in the *Tuzuk*: "The picture gallery in the garden had been ordered to be repaired; it was now

adorned with pictures by master hands. In the most honoured positions were the likenesses of Humayun and of my father opposite to my own, and that of my brother Shah 'Abbas...."²⁵ The paintings have long since disappeared.

Before the political designs of Shah 'Abbas to capture Qandahar became apparent, Jahangir looked upon him as a great ally and addressed him as "My Brother". One day he had a dream that he received in person the Persian Shah. Bishandas was yet to return from Persia and Abu'l Hasan, who was instructed to prepare a painting of the dream before the ensuing Nauruz festival, had great difficulty visualizing the Shah in the absence of an authentic likeness. He nevertheless prepared a magnificent picture of Jahangir embracing the Shah against a huge effulgent golden sun.²⁶ In a series of inscriptions Abu'l Hasan noted how he had skilfully used available materials, supplemented by verbal descriptions from people who had visited the Persian court and met the Shah, to visualize the scene and portray the Persian monarch. This remarkable picture, originally a part of the St Petersburg *Muraqqa'* is also preserved in the Freer Gallery of Art.

After hearing from Khan 'Alam the details of his experiences during his Persian sojourn and looking at the visual records brought by Bishandas, Jahangir must have longed to meet the Persian emperor. Another painting from the same *muraqqa'* and now in the same collection appears to be a direct outcome of such a wish.²⁷ It shows the two "brothers" seated on a large cushioned throne and attended by the chief counsellor Asaf



13. "Khodabande Mirza, father of Shah 'Abbas". Inscribed by Jahangir, "Khodabande Mirza, father of my brother Shah 'Abbas. Work of Bishandas". Page from the Nasir al-Din Album, Iran Bastan Museum, Tehran (from Godard, 1937, fig. 68, see note 23).

Khan holding a jewelled wine bottle and cup. Khan 'Alam holds a gold figure of Diana on a stag of the type made in Augsburg at the end of the sixteenth century in his left hand and a shaheen falcon on his right fist. A low table in front of them holds a variety of objects of foreign origin. The picture is not signed but the portrait of Shah 'Abbas closely conforms to his portrait in the British Museum (see figure 9). Jahangir had instructed his envoy to bring back all sorts of rare and interesting objects available in Persia and the selection presented in the picture consisting of Persian, Turkish, Chinese, and European objects must have come from this trip. An interesting feature noticed in the picture is the presence of billowing grey and golden clouds behind the heads of the two "brothers". This reminds us of similar dark clouds in the picture of the meeting of Shah 'Abbas and Khan 'Alam (see figure 11).

III

Not many of Bishandas's works made after his return from Persia have been traced. Three portrait groups and a single portrait, all mounted in different Shah Jahan albums and bearing attributions in Shah Jahan's hand, and two magnificent procession scenes coming from the royal histories attributed to him on stylistic grounds are all that have been found.

The single portrait is that of Raja Suraj Singh Rathore discussed earlier. The portrait groups show Rao Bharah and Jassa Jam seated in a landscape, and Rana Amar Singh of Mewar with his sons Karan and Bhim. These are imaginary pictures prepared long after their meetings with the Mughals, obviously for the albums compiled for Shah Jahan. Jaswanta, Jam Raja of Nawanagar in Kathiawar, came to pay homage to Jahangir when the latter was camping at Ahmedabad in early 1618. Jahangir was impressed with him and wrote in the *Tuzuk*: "His name is Jassa, and Jam is his title. Whoever succeeds is called Jam. He is one of the Zamindars of Gujarat, and indeed, he is one of the noted Rajas of Hindustan. His country is close to the sea."²⁸ Within a few days of Jaswanta's departure Rao Bharah, the ruler of Kachh, came to Jahangir's court.²⁹ Bishandas was away in those days in the Persian court. He must have based the double-portrait (figure 14) on likenesses painted by Abu'l Hasan and Govardhan.³⁰ The facial features and other details closely correspond with the originals, only here they are shown seated on a beautifully designed carpet placed on a raised platform, though the two Kathiawari rulers were never together in the Mughal camp.

This is also true of the group portrait of Rana Amar Singh of Mewar with his sons Karan and Bhim. Amar Singh died long before Bishandas's return from Persia and the latter never visited Mewar. His uncle Nanha was probably present in Khurram's entourage when the Rana paid his homage to the Mughal prince, as Nanha recorded the incident in a miniature of the *Jahangirnama* where he included himself in the Mughal camp.³¹ In Bishandas's group portrait the Rana and his sons are shown in a strange setting where they sit on a raised wooden *machan*-like platform within a thatched pavilion with a split bamboo basketry screen at the back (figure 15). Amar Singh is clad in Mughal court costume; a hunting falcon sits on the edge of the velvet floorspread. Karan sits on his right and Bhim sits at the right-hand corner of the platform facing his father. Jahangir writes in his memoirs that Karan was not sufficiently adept in the intricacies of Mughal court etiquette.³² Was this why the group has been presented in an inferior setting? The picture is mounted in the Wantage Album where Mughal originals are intermixed with late eighteenth-century copies. A replica of this group mounted on a folio of an album compiled in 1753 is in the Maharaja Sawai Man Singh II Museum, Jaipur.³³

Shah Jahan openly displayed his dynastic affiliation with Timur from whom the Mughals proudly traced their descent, and his albums usually opened with a double-page composition visualizing this idea in a unique manner. The right-hand folio often showed Timur seated on a throne under a canopy or a *chanar* tree in a hilly landscape handing over a crown or a turban plume to Babur, the founder of the line in India, seated on

14. "Jassa Jam and Rao Bharah". Signed by Bishandas. From the Minto Album, Victoria and Albert Museum, London, IM. 124A-1921. Courtesy of the Trustees of the V&A.



15. "Rana Amar Singh and his sons Karan and Bhim". Signed by Bishandas. From the Wantage Album, Victoria and Albert Museum, London, IM. 119-1921. V&A Picture Library.

16. "Asaf Khan, Sa'diq Khan, Mir Jumla, and Afzal Khan accompanying the procession"; detail of a double-page illustration from the *Padshahnama*. The Royal Library, Windsor Castle, folio 120v. The Royal Collection © Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II.



another throne to his right, with Humayun similarly enthroned on the other side. The facing page shows Akbar seated on an identical throne in an identical setting giving the crown or the turban plume to Jahangir seated on his right with Shah Jahan looking at them. In the Nasir al-Din Album a similar pair of paintings shows such a composition.³⁴ The right-hand picture inscribed to Bishandas in Shah Jahan's hand shows Timur seated on an octagonal throne in the centre looking at Babur seated to his right. No crown or turban ornament, or any other symbol of royalty is shown, only a book is placed on Babur's lap highlighting his literary flair. Two nobles, Shahrukh Mirza and Bairam Khan, wait on them in the foreground, in the same manner as Asaf Khan and Khan 'Alam were shown in the picture of Jahangir and Shah 'Abbas seated on a throne, discussed above. There are at least three more sets of such dynastic images used as album frontispieces for Shah Jahan. In the *Padshahnama* Shah Jahan is shown alone on one side receiving the symbolic crown from Timur depicted alone on the facing folio.³⁵ It should be remembered that Shah Jahan used the title *Sabib qiran-e Sani* following Timur's title, *Sabib qiran*. Bishandas's treatment of the figures of Timur, Babur, and Humayun is drab and unremarkable.

Milo Beach has attributed the procession scene in the Rampur Raza Library to Bishandas, disregarding a late ascription to Manohar written on the picture.³⁶ The scene is



usually thought to be from the *Jahangirnāma*. However, the grouping of the figures of musketeers, standard-bearers, attendants, singers, musicians, female dancers (*lulis*) and their accompanists, and ceremonial elephants and horses in a steeply rising picture plane is closely similar to the double-page scene of the grand procession arranged to deliver the *sachik* (wedding presents) for Dara Shukoh's wedding in 1632, in the Windsor Palace *Padshahnama* attributed to Bishandas.³⁷ There is no doubt that the Rampur procession scene and the *Padshahnama* double-page are composed by the same hand.

The wedding of Dara Shukoh to his cousin Nadira Banu Begum, daughter of his uncle Sultan Parwez, was a major event celebrated on a grand scale over a long period of time. According to the author of the *Padshahnama*, two lakhs of rupees, one lakh in cash and one lakh in goods, half of which were precious gems and the other half fine textiles, were taken from the royal treasury as *sachik* by the Chief Diwan Afzal Khan 'Allami. The procession of numerous bearers carrying salvers of gifts covered with rich velvets and brocaded *thalposh*, attendants with floral sticks, musicians, singers, trumpeteers, and drummers riding on decorated horses and elephants, and bands of women singers on open howdahs are escorted by four leading nobles — Asaf Khan the Emperor's father-in-law, Sa'diq Khan the Mir Bakshi, Mir Jumla the Chief Steward, and Afzal Khan — riding on decorated horses in the middle of the right half (figure 16). Only an experienced and talented painter of Bishandas's calibre could compose such a crowded and complicated yet clearly conceived scene with a huge number of people of various social strata and professions. The manner in which the flower-bearers and gift-carriers turn their heads and exchange pleasantries with each other, and the female singers and musicians express their gestures and feelings is only possible for a painter who composed "Birth of a prince" (see figure 5). The din and bustle of the music and the beating of drums mixed with the lilting sound of the *shehnais* and trumpets fill the air with spontaneous festivity.

Bishandas appears to have ceased to work after this as no other example bearing the unmistakable stamp of his style has been found.

Notes

1. Robinson 1972; Beach 1978, p. 107, quoting Abdur Rahim, "Mughal Relations with Persia", *Islamic Culture*, VIII and IX.
2. Victoria and Albert Museum, London, Acc. no. 26-1913 IM, ff. 276b-277a; both halves reproduced in R. Crill, "A Lost Mughal Miniature Rediscovered", *V & A Album*, 4, 1985, fig. 3.
3. Das 1978, chapter 3; Linda York Leach, *Mughal and Other Indian Paintings from the Chester Beatty Library* (London 1995), chapter II; Beach 1978.
4. A. Welch and S.C. Welch, *Arts of the Islamic Book: The collection of Sadruddin Aga Khan* (Ithaca 1982), pp. 191-98, no. 64.
5. M.C. Beach in A. Soudavar, *Art of the Persian Courts* (New York 1992), no. 137u.
6. Folio 64r: J.V.S. Wilkinson and B. Gray, "Indian Paintings in a Persian Museum", *Burlington Magazine*, 66, 1935, plate IIB; folio 125: Y. Godard, "Les marges du Murakka' Gulshan", *Athar-e Iran* (Paris 1936), pp. 12, 31 (not illustrated).
7. S.C. Welch, *Art of Mughal India* (New York 1963), no. 23; idem, *India* (New York 1985), no. 139; Das 1971; idem, "Persian Masterworks and Their Transfiguration in Jahangir's Taswirkhana", in Sheila Canby, ed., *Humayun's Garden Party: Princes of the House of Timur and Early Mughal Painting* (Bombay 1994), p. 148, fig. 10; and J. Seyller, "Recycled Images: Over-painting in Early Mughal Art", *ibid.*, p. 69, fig. 23.
8. P. Pal, *Indian Painting* (Los Angeles 1993), no. 68. The Musfiq page is published in T. McInerney, *Indian Painting 1525-1825* (London 1982), no. 9.
9. J. Seyller, *op. cit.*, for the detail showing the ascription to Bishandas, p. 63, fig. 2 (inscription very indistinct).
10. S.C. Welch et al., *The Emperor's Album* (New York 1993), no. 28.

11. Leach, op. cit., vol. II, pp. 586-87, no. 5.315, colour plate 88. I do not agree with her identification of the patron.
12. M.C. Beach, *Mughal and Rajput Painting, The New Cambridge History of India*, 1.3 (Cambridge 1992), fig. 68.
13. *Tuzuk*, vol. II, pp. 116-17. He was so pleased with Bishandas's work that he rewarded him with an elephant.
14. A.K. Coomaraswamy, "Notes on Indian Painting, 4: Bishandas and Others", *Artibus Asiae*, II, 1927, pp. 283-90; E. Kuhnelt, "Han 'Alam und die diplomatischen Beziehungen zwischen Jahangir und Shah 'Abbas", *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenlandischen Gesellschaft*, vol. 96, 1942, pp. 171-86; I. Stchoukine, *Les peintures des manuscrits de Shah 'Abbas I^{er} a la fin des Safavis* (Paris 1964); Robinson 1972; Grube and Sims 1995.
15. Otto Kurz, "A Volume of Mughal Drawings and Miniatures", *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 1967, pp. 268-71, plates 7-8.
16. *Indian Drawings*. An exhibition chosen by Howard Hodgkin with an introduction by Terence McNerney (London 1983), No. 2.
17. Kurz, op. cit., p. 253, No. 11; Grube and Sims 1995, plate VIIIb.
18. J.M. Rogers, *Mughal Miniatures* (London 1993), colour plate 72.
19. Jahangir gives a detailed account in the *Tuzuk* (vol. I, pp. 370-71): As Khan 'Alam was without control in continual smoking of tobacco, he frequently practised it. Yadgar 'Ali Sultan, ambassador of the ruler of Iran, represented to Shah 'Abbas that Khan 'Alam could never be a moment without tobacco — and he (Shah 'Abbas) wrote this couplet in answer — "The friend's envoy wishes to exhibit tobacco/With fidelity's lamp I light up the tobacco-market." Khan 'Alam in answer wrote and sent the verse, "I, poor wretch, was miserable at the tobacco notice/By the just Shah's favour the tobacco-market became brisk."
20. Crill, op. cit., p. 331f; *Sotheby's Sale Catalogue*, April 23, 1996, lot 6.
21. Victoria and Albert Museum, London, No. IS 219-1951; Crill, op. cit., fig. 2.
22. Anonymous (O.C. Gangoly), "An Historical Miniature of the Jahangir School", *Rupam*, I, No. 4 (Calcutta 1920), pp. 8-11.
23. Y. Godard, "Un album de portraits des princes timurides de l'Inde", *Athar-e Iran*, II (Paris 1937), p. 194, fig. 68.
24. P. Brown, *Indian Paintings Under the Mughals* (Oxford 1924), plate LIX, fig. 2. Now in the British Museum, No. 1955, 10-8 041. See: L. Ashton, *Art of India and Pakistan* (London 1950), p. 148, No. 659 for earlier identification of the subject with Daniyal, and other references.
25. *Tuzuk*, II, pp. 161f.
26. R. Ettinghausen, *Paintings of the Sultans and Emperors of India in American Collections* (New Delhi 1961), plate 12.
27. Ibid., plate 13; Das 1971, pp. 189-90, fig. 361. The attribution to Abu'l Hasan (Das 1978, p. 219f.) stands discarded.
28. *Tuzuk*, I, pp. 443-44; II, pp. 2-3, 19. A striking portrait of the Jam was painted by Nadir uz-Zaman on Jahangir's orders that finds place on folio 23 of the Berlin Album: E. Kuhnelt and H. Goetz, *Indian Book Painting from Jahangir's Album in the State Library in Berlin* (London 1926), plate 37.
29. *Tuzuk*, II, p. 19. Govardhan was commissioned by Jahangir to draw his likeness, now preserved in the same folio of the Berlin Album: Kuhnelt and Goetz, op. cit., plate 36 (see next essay on Govardhan by M.C. Beach, figure 7). Govardhan also painted a fine portrait of Rao Bharah's son: *Sotheby's Sale Catalogue*, London, October 18, 1995, lot 94.
30. Vide notes 28 and 29.
31. J. Guy and D. Swallow, eds., *Arts of India: 1500-1900* (London 1990), p. 78, no. 53.
32. *Tuzuk*, I, pp. 277-78.
33. A.K. Das, *Treasures of Indian Painting*, Series III (Jaipur 1982), plate IV. The painting is mounted on an album page bearing the nine-circle Jahangiri seal and the date AH 1022 (1615), the year of Khurram's Mewar campaign.
34. Y. Godard, op. cit., 1937, fig. 63. She wrongly identifies the central figure as Miranshah. The facing page showing Akbar flanked by Jahangir and Shah Jahan is signed by Balchand.
35. M.C. Beach and E. Koch, *King of the World* (London 1997), fig. 3.
36. P. Brown, op. cit., colour plate XXXI; Beach and Koch, op. cit., p. 181, fig. 102. The suggestion was first made in Beach 1978, p. 110.
37. Ibid., plates 21-22.

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M.C. Beach, *The Grand Mogul* (Williamstown 1978).

Das 1971

A.K. Das, "Bishandas", in Anand Krishna, ed., *Chhavi* (Varanasi 1971), pp. 183-91.

Das 1978

A.K. Das, *Mughal Painting During Jahangir's Time* (Calcutta 1978).

Grube and Sims 1995

Ernst J. Grube and Eleanor Sims, "The Representations of Shah 'Abbas I", in *L'Arco di fango che rubo la luce alle stelle: Studi in onore de Eugenio Galdieri* (Lugano 1995), pp. 177-208.

Robinson 1972

B.W. Robinson, "Shah 'Abbas and the Mughal Ambassador Khan 'Alam: The Pictorial Record", *Burlington Magazine*, February 1972, vol. 56, no.3.

Tuzuk

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Govardhan: “Servant of Jahangir”

Milo C. Beach

The artist Govardhan is a remarkably lively presence within the group of painters depicted on a page of the *Muraqqa' Gulshan*, the great album assembled for the Mughal emperor Jahangir (figure 1). Inscribed *Shabib-i Govardhan az 'amal-i Daulat* (Portrait of Govardhan, work of Daulat),¹ the highly individualistic portrayal indicates that the artist was a relatively young man about 1605, the probable date of the work.² Nonetheless he was even then of sufficient eminence to be shown alongside such experienced artists as Bishan Das, Daulat, Manohar, and the even younger Abu'l Hasan.³

All of these men were at least second-generation members of artist families in imperial employ — Govardhan, for example, was the son of the artist Bhawani Das. This information is inscribed on an additional folio of the same album (see figure 6), where a young calligrapher depicted at the bottom writes on a scroll: *'Amal-i kamtarin-i kbanazadan Govardhan, Jahangir Shabi, wald Bhawani Das, Khatm shud san 1018*. Work of the most humble houseborn Govardhan, the servant of King Jahangir, son of Bhawani Das. Finished in the year 1018 [AD 1609-10].⁴ These two documents together provide the only biographical information we have about the artist, although it is more than we have for many of Govardhan's colleagues.⁵ On the other hand, reliably inscribed works allow us to judge with confidence the evolution of his skills over almost half a century.

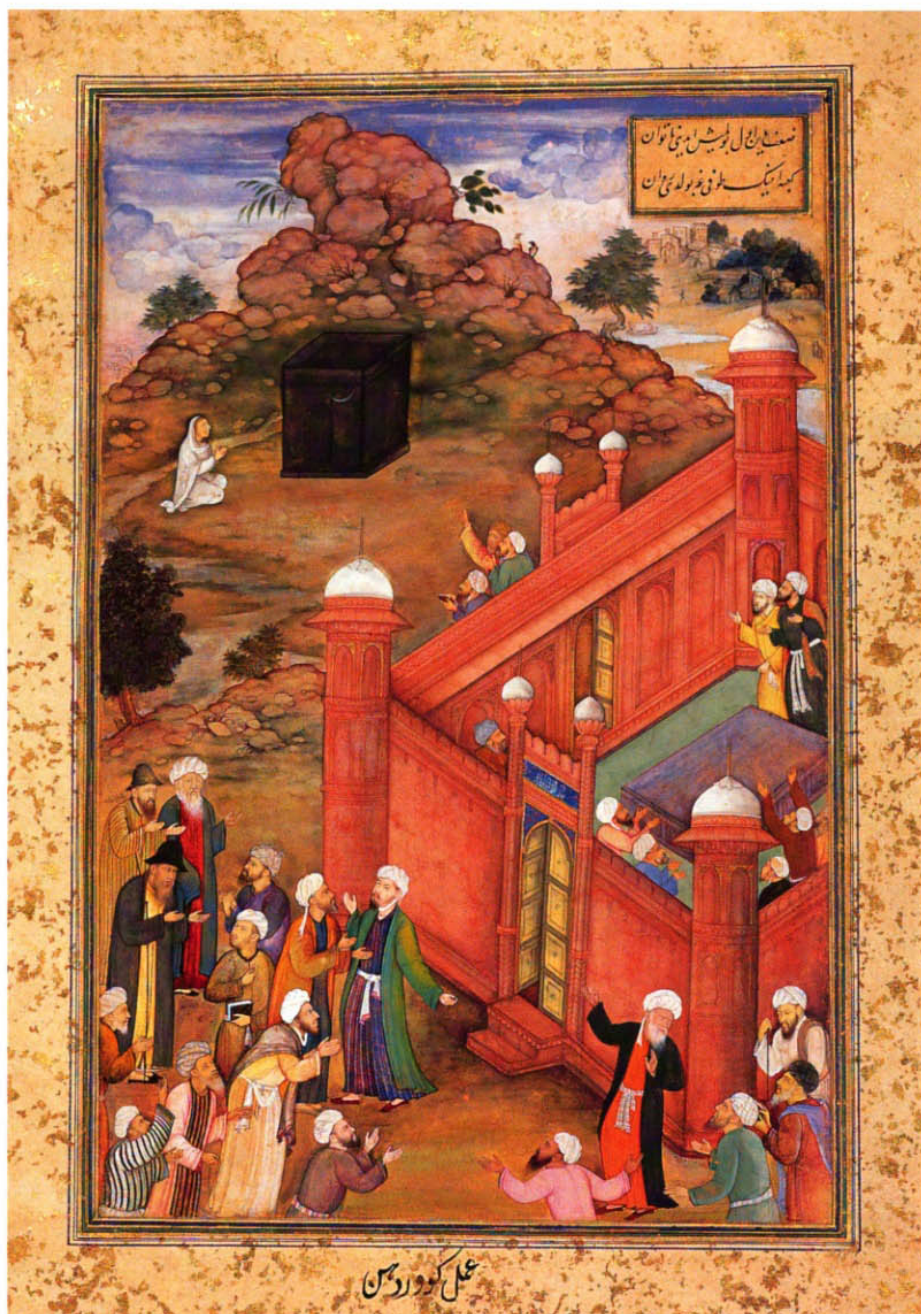
While the full name Bhawani Das does not occur on any known Mughal illustrations, the artist is almost certainly the painter Bhawani whose name occurs on pages of the great imperial *Razmnama* and *Ramayana* manuscripts now in Jaipur, as well as on the Victoria and Albert Museum *Akbarnama* and various *Baburnamas*.⁶ Active in a time of rapidly moving artistic change, Bhawani's style in the context of these manuscripts must be termed old-fashioned. The best example of his work is "The construction of Fatehpur-Sikri" (figure 4), from the circa 1590 *Akbarnama*, a page he executed following a design by Tulsi the Elder. Bhawani was not a master illustrator; he was instead a painter who more often — as here — executed designs laid out by senior artists. He was clearly trained in local, pre-Mughal painting workshops, for his individual figures are defined through strong colour contrasts, expressive silhouettes, and the flat, angular profile drawing that distinguishes pre-Mughal styles from the more fluid lines and graceful, Persianate taste that Mughal painting quickly took as its ideal. When Bhawani drew three-quarter profiles, the eyes do not focus, and physiognomies are never convincingly organic — details and goals already mastered in works by his colleagues within the same manuscripts. If "The construction of Fatehpur-Sikri" is a wonderfully lively painting, it is because it continues the entrenched interest of Indian artists in the use of gesture to convey narrative; not because it exhibits mastery of the developing Mughal penchant for convincingly portrait-like characterizations and the exploration of states of mind.

The reason for examining Bhawani's paintings, however, is that younger members of artist families inevitably worked first with and learned their skills from their fathers. This is true of Govardhan's contemporaries: Manohar, for example, where a concern for three-dimensional form quickly developed through apprenticeship with his father Basawan; and Abu'l Hasan, whose more Persianate style is directly attributable to his father, the Iranian emigre painter Aqa Riza.⁷ It should therefore be no surprise that Govardhan's earliest reliably attributable works show considerable weakness in the depiction of figures. That faces are stiff and formulaic might be unexpected of an artist whose later portraits are supremely probing if we did not know that this was a specific weakness of his father's work as well.

Govardhan's earliest known paintings are found in another *Akbarnama* manuscript, the copy presented to the emperor in 1596 (figure 5).⁸ While these illustrations are the work of an artist immature in some ways, Govardhan already shows unusual competence in the expressive grouping of figures and such details as the modelling of layered cloth on human bodies, a skill at which he would become unrivalled. And unlike Bhawani, whose figures all stare off into space, even these earliest works by Govardhan show

1. "Portrait of Govardhan". By Daulat, circa 1605. From the *Muraqqa' Gulshan*, Gulistan Palace Library, Tehran.

2. "A gathering of elders". By Govardhan, circa 1605. From a *Khamsa* of Mir 'Ali Shir Nava'i manuscript. The Royal Library, Windsor Castle, MS. A8, fol. 20v, The Royal Collection © Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II.



interest in human interactions: figures look at each other, and their glances meet; one senses communication among sympathetic humans, even if it is a figural formula rather than distinctive individual personalities that we encounter. Two additional paintings from this same general phase of his work were contributed to the *Khamsa* of Mir 'Ali Shir Nava'i, a manuscript now in the Royal Library at Windsor (figures 2 and 3), and there he has begun to understand spatial volume. The manuscript had been written at Herat in 1492, but illustrations were evidently added at Bokhara about 1540.⁹ During the first year of Jahangir's reign, these paintings — perhaps because of damage — were repainted by Mughal artists. Of the two added by Govardhan, one (figure 2) shows no immediate evidence of the underlying work, while the second (figure 3) has retained the architecture and distant trees of the original composition. As we will see below, awareness of (and willingness to incorporate) Persian style was crucial to Govardhan's evolution as an artist. These remain slightly awkward works, however, despite the stylistic advances they reveal, for there is still relatively little variety in facial types.

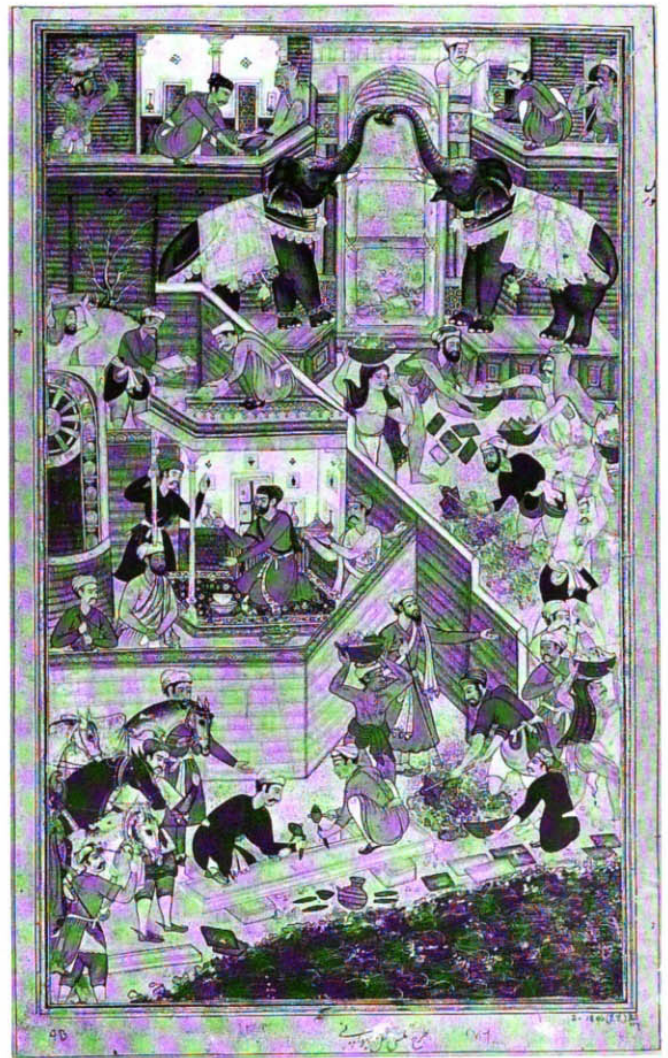
3. "Scene in a bathhouse". By Govardhan, circa 1605. From a *Khamisa* of Mir 'Ali Shir Nava'i manuscript. The Royal Library, Windsor Castle, MS. A8, fol. 35v, The Royal Collection © Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II.



By 1610, Govardhan's talents are fully developed. His next inscribed and dated work is the marginal figures of the *Muraqqa' Gulshan* page dated 1609-10 and cited above (figure 6).¹⁰ The subjects, holy men and members of the literati, are those men with whom the artist seems to have been most in sympathy — his depictions are of extraordinary intensity. We are also presented with portraits that seem convincingly those of actual people; and unlike the Mir 'Ali Shir Nava'i illustrations, the colours that describe cloth here have taken on the texture of material, rather than retaining the visual effect of pigment on paper.

A standing portrait of Rao Bhara (figure 7), a zamindar from Kutch, is among four individual studies placed together on a single *Muraqqa' Gulshan* folio. A vivid depiction of both personality and physical appearance, it has been inscribed by Jahangir: *Shabih-i Rao Bhara, zamindar-i wilayat-i Kachh. Raqam Govardhan san 13 [julius] mutabiq 1027, dar balda-i Ahmadabad rasid. Hararra-i Nuruddin Jahangir ibn Akbar Badshah Ghazi. Bhara-i mazkur az zamindaran-i ma'tabar-i Suba-i Gujarat ast, wa ba-didan-i hech yak*

4. "The construction of Fatehpur-Sikri". Designed by Tulsi the Elder, painted by Bhawani, circa 1590. From an *Akbarnama* manuscript. Victoria and Albert Museum, London, IS. 2-1896 86/117. Courtesy of the Trustees of the V&A.



5. "Abu'l Fazl presenting his book to Akbar". By Govardhan. From an *Akbarnama* manuscript, circa 1596. The Chester Beatty Library, Dublin, MS. 3, fol. 176b.

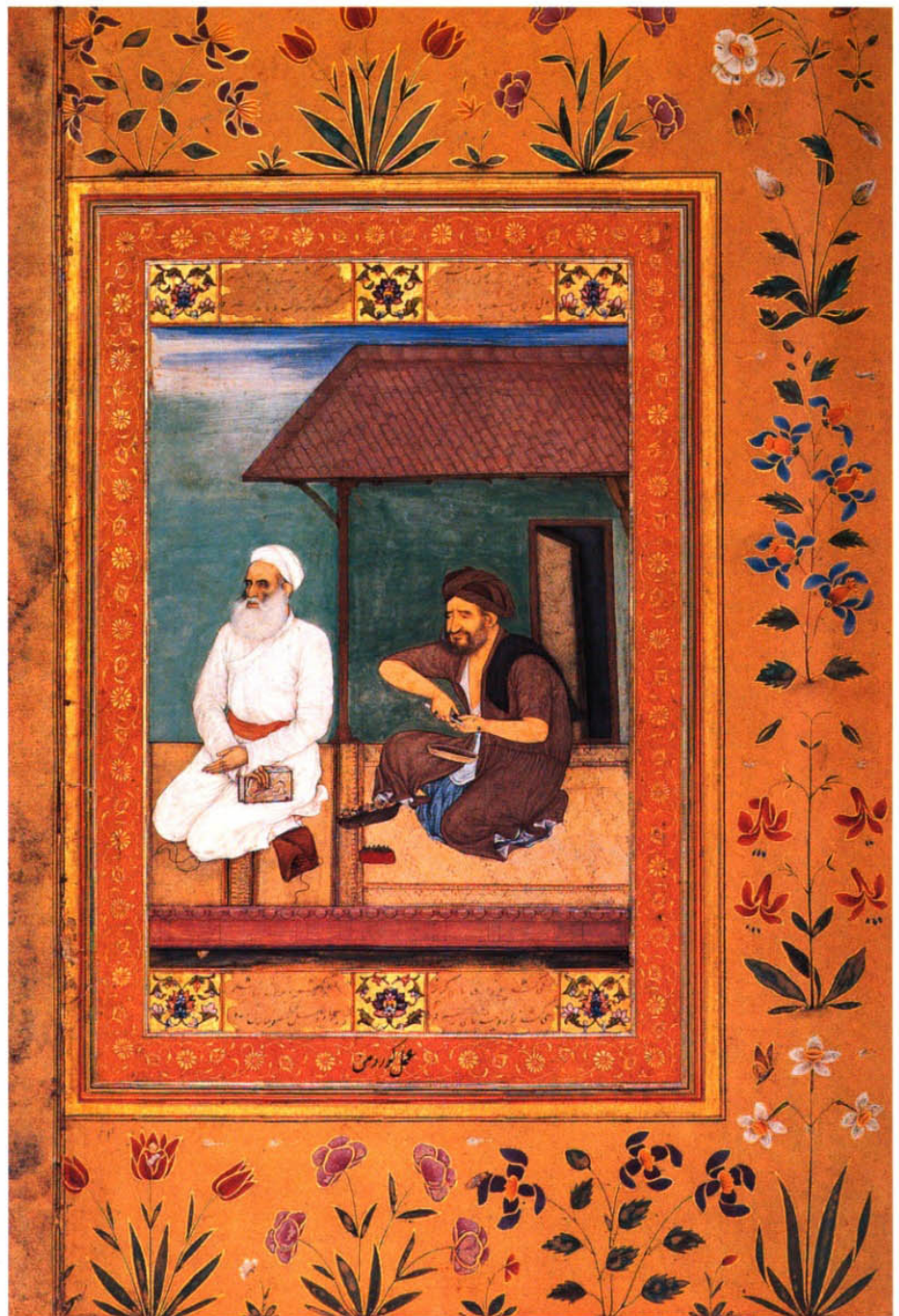
6. Marginal designs by Govardhan, dated 1609-10. From the Jahangir Album. Staatsbibliothek Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Berlin, fol. 25b.



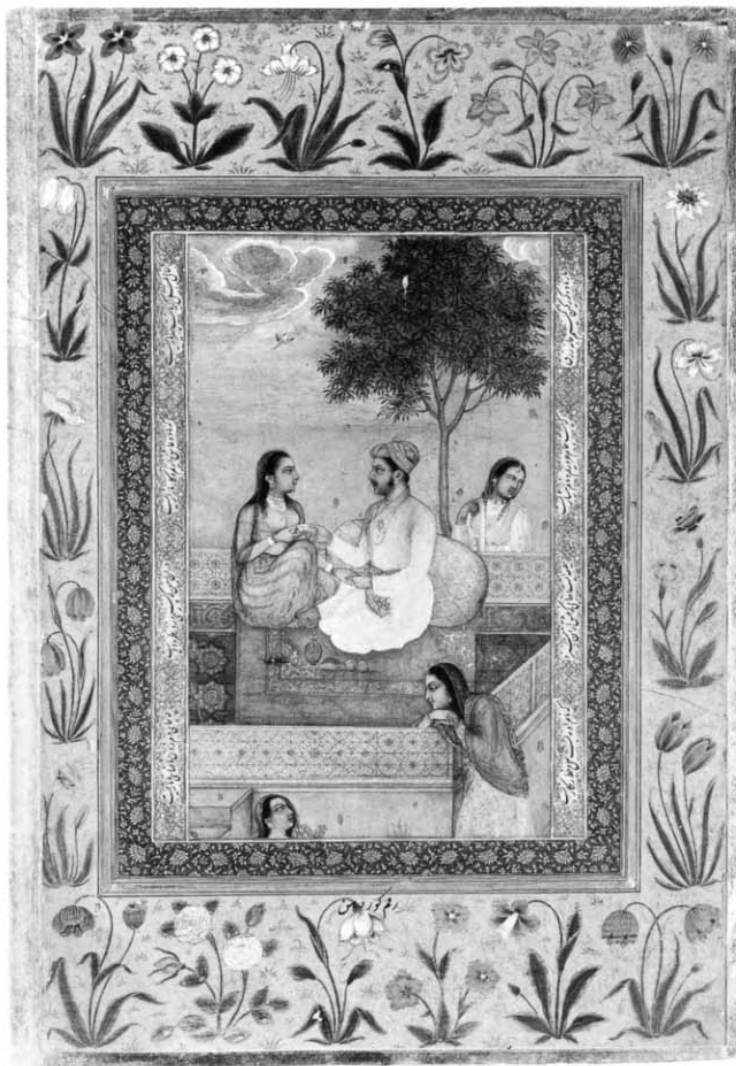
7. "Portrait of Rao Bhara". By Govardhan, dated 1617. From the Jahangir Album. Staatsbibliothek Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Berlin, fol. 23a.

az bukkam-i in dayar nayamda bud. Portrait of Rao Bhara, Chief of the country of Kutch. Painted by Govardhan. In the 13th Regnal Year, corresponding to 1027 [AD 1617], he [Rao Bhara] arrived at the city of Ahmedabad. Written by Nuruddin Jahangir, son of Akbar Badshah Ghazi. The said Bhara is one of the great zamindars of the *Suba* of Gujarat, and had not come to see any of the rulers [ever before].¹¹ Govardhan shows him dressed in white, against a dark brown background. The modelling of the cloth and of his hands, combined with acutely observed portraiture, gives the *rao* astonishing physical presence. Like most of Govardhan's best work, the composition is highly understated and the human qualities of the subject are thereby made unavoidable.

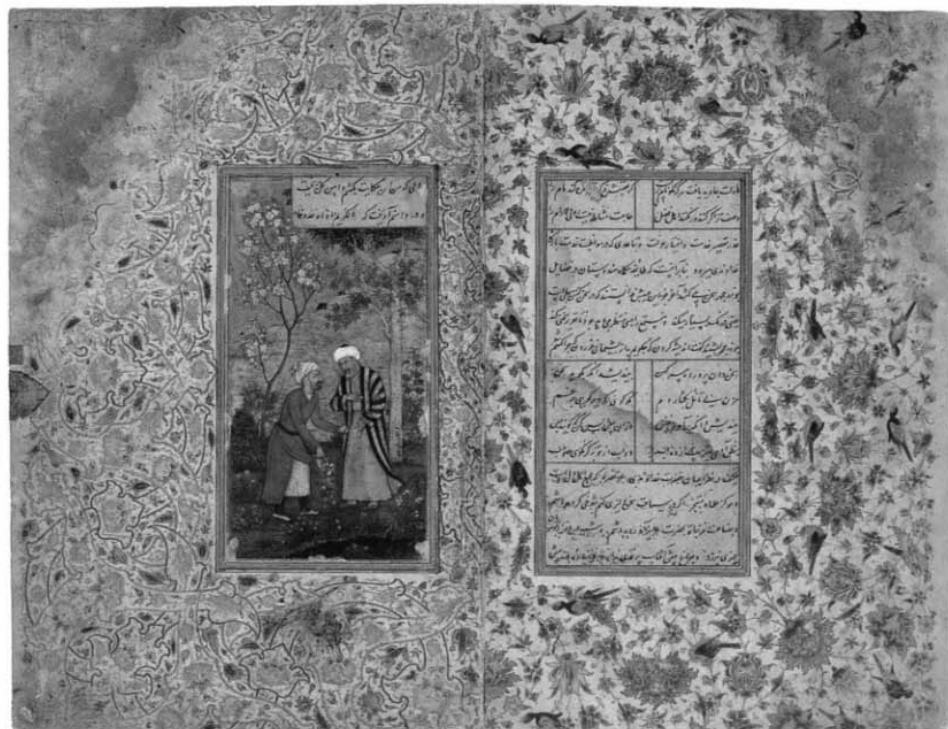
Rao Bhara's appearance at the Mughal court in Ahmedabad where Jahangir made a lengthy visit between his departure from Ajmer in November 1616 and his return to Agra early in 1619, was an important act of homage in the emperor's eyes and it is discussed at length in the *Jahangirnama* (*Tuzuk-i Jahangiri*).¹² Despite the fact that the court was



8. "Shaikh Husain Jami and attendant". By Govardhan, circa 1620-25. Musée Guimet, Paris, Acc. no. 7173. Photograph: RMN/Arnaudet.



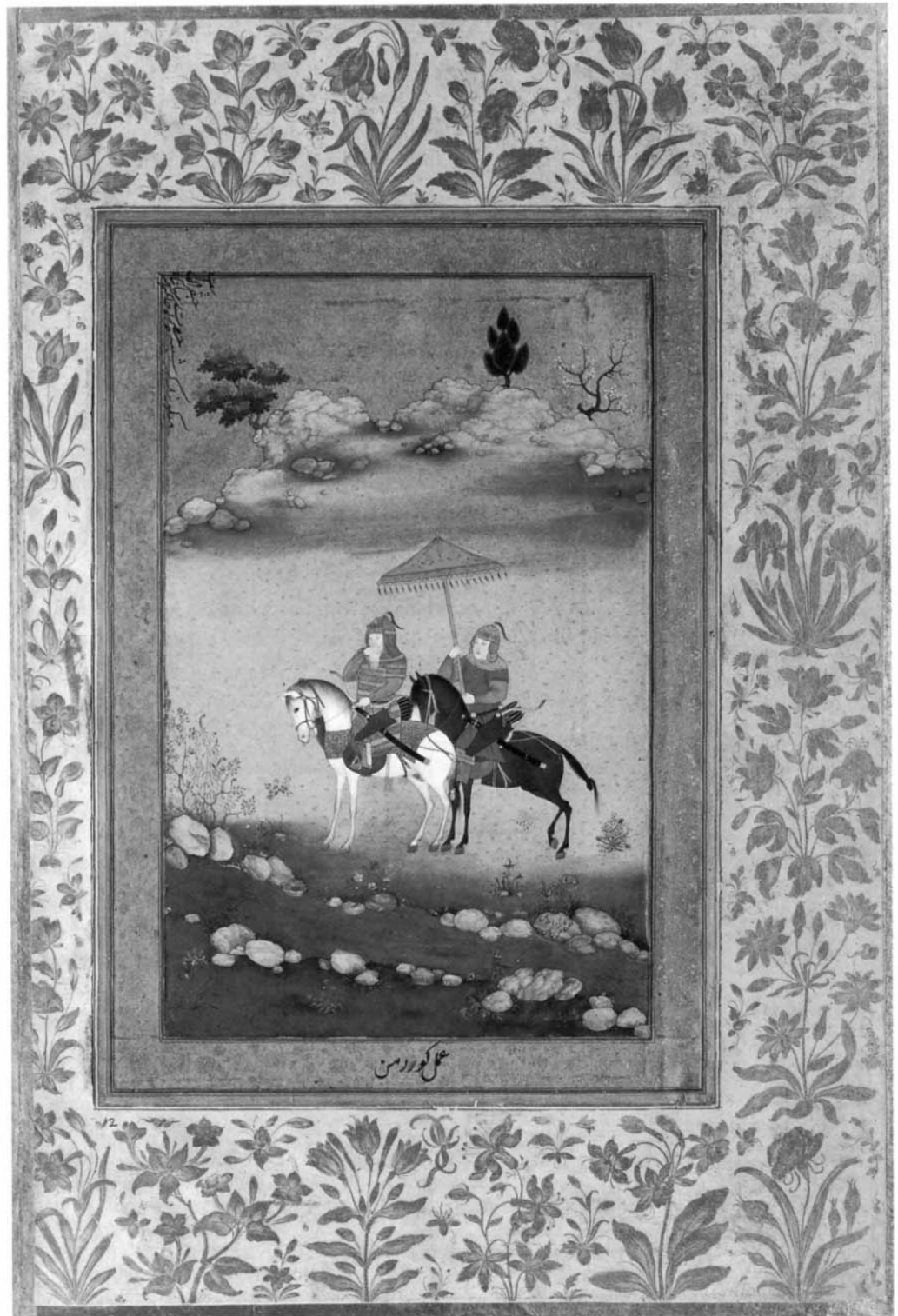
9. "Prince and consorts on a terrace". By Govardhan, circa 1620-25. The Chester Beatty Library, Dublin, MS. 7, no. 2.



10. "Sa'di in the rose-garden". By Govardhan, circa 1640. From a *Gulistan* of Sa'di, fol.6v. Art and History Trust, Liechtenstein. Courtesy of the Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC.



11. "Shahjahan riding with Dara Shikoh". By Govardhan, circa 1638. From the Minto Album. Victoria and Albert Museum, London, IM: 18-1925. V&A Picture Library.



12. "Timur riding with an attendant". By Govardhan, circa 1638. From the Minto Album. The Chester Beatty Library, Dublin, MS. 7, no. 3.

continually on the move, artistic production never flagged. Govardhan must certainly have painted the portrait of Rao Bhara in Ahmedabad and after directly studying the subject. Moreover, immediately following Jahangir's description of the visit, the emperor noted that Abu'l Hasan presented him with the frontispiece illustration for the *Jahangirnama*¹³ — perhaps the most important illustration made during his reign. A separate portrait by Abu'l Hasan of Jassa Jam, a second Gujarati zamindar who came to court at this time, is placed to face the portrait of Rao Bhara in the *Muraqqa' Gulshan*¹⁴ and must also have been made at this time. A few days later, Jahangir recorded the presentation of the first formally prepared copy of the text of his memoirs, with two more volumes ready some days after.¹⁵ At least one illustration for the *Jahangirnama* depicts him at Ahmedabad,¹⁶ and taken all together this provides irrefutable evidence that the workshops travelled intact and continued long-standing projects whenever the emperor made these extensive tours. It also means that painters were never far from the imperial eye.

Continuing to limit ourselves to reliably inscribed works, the best evidence for Govardhan's fully mature style is "Shaikh Husain Jami and attendant" (figure 8), an album page in the Musée Guimet, Paris. In this severely simple composition, ordered with the balance of a Mondrian, we see the elderly blind shaikh attended by a servant cutting betel-nut to make *pan*. The appearance of each of the men is presented to highlight his physical individuality, but the composition reinforces their roles: the servant is caught mid-gesture with a momentary distortion of his features as an expression of concentration, while the shaikh is completely calm. The architecture places each man within his own space, yet we cannot doubt their awareness of each other. This work represents a refinement and heightening of the portrait skills which Govardhan betrays in mature form as early as the *Muraqqa' Gulshan* border figures of 1609-10 (see figure 6). Here and in the well-known "Prince and consorts on a terrace" (figure 9), the artist's concern for a careful balance of shapes on a flat surface becomes evident. Earlier Mughal obsession with creating a pictorial equivalent for spatial depth has been replaced, for Govardhan, by absorption into the problem of defining a surface at once decorative and expressive. In the Windsor manuscript (see figure 2), he showed an early interest in defining architectural and spatial volume, but his greatest later works emphasize flat grounds, physically and tonally refined pigments, and elegant surface patterns. More than many of his contemporaries, Govardhan increasingly adopted the aesthetic ideals of Persian painting.¹⁷

"Sa'di in the rose-garden" (figure 10), from a *Gulistan* of Sa'di datable to about 1640, must have been painted when — judging by his portrait and the date of the *Akbarnama* illustrations — the painter was close to sixty years of age. Like the *Khamse* of Mir 'Ali Shir Nava'i, the *Gulistan* too was a fifteenth-century Persian manuscript with original illustrations repainted in Shahjahan's studios.¹⁸ "Shahjahan riding with Dara Shikoh" (figure 11), and "Timur riding with an attendant" (figure 12), facing pages from the Minto Album, are of the same approximate date. All of these works use thinner pigment than the portraits of about 1610, and the artist is less interested in capturing the physical mass of human figures; instead we see an extraordinary elegance of colour (with tones of gold predominant) and a delicate, highly refined placement of landscape and floral motifs. No detail so convincingly argues the effect of Persian aesthetic taste on Govardhan as the flowering tree behind the gardener in figure 10. Its artistic source is the style represented by the trees painted a century earlier in Bokhara and beneath which the young Govardhan added the bathers in figure 3. The portrait of Timur that faces the equestrian Shahjahan in the Minto Album even more consciously and thoroughly retains a Timurid style, this time in homage to the subject. This interest in the kind of epicurean restraint more often associated with Persian than Mughal painting requires no diminution of Govardhan's concentration of expressive human relationships, however; the communication between the poet Sa'di and the gardener whom he encounters is the real

subject of the work. Everything else is of lesser importance. In his late illustrations, Govardhan has become a supreme master of reticence; there are no extraneous details in works reliably ascribed to his hand. This innovative combination of interests is his distinctive contribution to Mughal tradition.

Notes

1. Quoted from Verma, *Mughal Painters*, p. 128.
2. Two major portions of the original album exist. The section in the Gulistan Palace Library, Tehran, contains pages dated between 1599 and 1609; while a second group, in the Staatsbibliothek, Berlin, includes paintings dated between 1609 and 1618. Several separate, dispersed folios are in various public and private collections. For a discussion, and bibliography, see Milo C. Beach, *The Grand Mogul*, pp. 43-59, and Beach, *The Imperial Image: Paintings for the Mughal Court* (Washington, DC 1981), pp. 156-67.
The portrait of Govardhan is in the first section alongside a teenage Abu'l Hasan, who is known to have been born about 1588-89 (see Beach, *Grand Mogul*, p. 86). Thus 1605 seems a reasonable approximate date for the depictions.
3. For a full-view of the page in question see Yedda Godard, "Les Marges du Murakka Gulshan", in *Albar-e Iran*, vol. 1 (Paris 1936), fig. 9.
4. Quoted from Verma, *Mughal Painters*, p. 162.
5. Verma has written that the young calligrapher is a self-portrait by Govardhan (Verma, *Mughal Painters*, p. 162, no. 10). However, the youth in the 1609-10 page is even younger than the Govardhan portrayed in the earlier portrait by Daulat. Judging by his age in 1609-10, the calligrapher portrayed could not have been active in 1596, the date of Govardhan's earliest known works. Thus it cannot be a self-portrait.
6. For a list of Bhawani's paintings, see Verma, *Mughal Painters*, pp. 98-100.
7. For a study of Manohar, see Glenn D. Lowry, "Manohar", in Beach, *Grand Mogul*, pp. 130-36. Abu'l Hasan's relationship with Aqa Riza is discussed in Beach, op. cit., pp. 86-95; and Beach, "The Mughal Painter Abu'l Hasan and Some English Sources for his Style", in *The Journal of the Walters Art Gallery*, xxxviii, pp. 7-33.
8. For pages ascribed to Govardhan, and further information about the manuscript, see: Thomas W. Arnold and J.V.S. Wilkinson, *The Library of A. Chester Beatty: A Catalogue of Indian Miniatures* (London 1936), vol. I, pp. 4-12; and vol. II, pls. 6-37. This manuscript has recently been redated to circa 1596 by Professor John Seyller; see: Seyller, "Scribal Notes on Mughal manuscript illustrations", in *Artibus Asiae*, vol. 48, nos. 3/4, pp. 247-77.
9. MS. A8, in which Govardhan's painted fols. 20v and 35v. For a discussion, see: Jeremiah Losty, *The Art of the Book* (London 1982), no. 77, page 96. Losty presents good evidence that the illustrations were finished in 1605, although it might otherwise seem that Govardhan's contribution might be five years earlier.
10. Govardhan's style is so recognizably distinct by this time that a second Jahangir album page, now in the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, can certainly be attributed to the artist also. (See Beach, *Grand Mogul*, no. 5; P. Pal, *Indian Painting. A Catalogue of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art Collection*, Vol. I [Los Angeles 1993], no. 558, pp. 220-23.)
11. Quoted from Verma, *Mughal Painters*, p. 163.
12. Henry Beveridge, ed., *The Tuzuk-i Jahangiri, or Memoirs of Jahangir*, tr. Alexander Rogers (New Delhi 1968 reprint), vol. II, pp. 19-20.
13. Ibid., p. 20.
14. E. Kuhnelt and H. Goetz, *Indian Book Painting from Jahangir's Album in the State Library in Berlin* (London 1926), pl. 37.
15. Beveridge, op. cit., pp. 26-27, and 37.
16. Beach, *Imperial Image*, no. 17d, pp. 171-72.
17. For the historical background to this development, see Asok Kumar Das, "Persian Masterworks and their Transformation in Jahangir's Taswirkhana", in Sheila Canby, ed. *Humayun's Garden Party* (Bombay 1994), pp. 135-52.
18. See Aboulala Soudavar (with a contribution by Milo Cleveland Beach), *The Art of the Persian Courts* (New York 1992), no. 136, pp. 332-38.

Further Reading

- Som Prakash Verma, "Govardhan", in *Mughal Painters and Their Work. A Biographical Survey and Comprehensive Catalogue* (New Delhi 1994), pp. 160-67.
- Amina Okada, *Indian Miniatures of the Mughal Court* (New York 1992), pp. 185-205.
- Milo C. Beach, "Govardhan", in *The Grand Mogul* (Williamstown, Mass. 1978), pp. 118-25.

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